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## Editorials:

### The Torah Deserves More Kavod Than This

By Fruma Landa, Editor in Chief

History repeats itself. Battles once fought are long forgotten and the gifts of progress given to us are often taken for granted. By forgetting the efforts of the ones who came before us who put we run the risk of giving way to complacency. We become settled with the world the way it is, and naively believe that what we have now will last.

The *YU Observer* [archives](#) are full of articles discussing women's Talmud study ('73, '76, '89). There were Torah learning initiatives that were started, and lost, and sometimes even restarted. An article in [The Commentator](#) goes through a quick analysis of some of the Talmud course evolution at Stern College for Women and outlines changes over the years. Like those who came before us, we too are not immune from losing the Torah opportunities we, as well as the passionate students before us, worked so hard for.

Rav Ezra Schwartz's Advanced Talmud course, as well as the Introduction to Talmud course taught by Rabbi David Pahmer, were [cancelled](#) for the Fall 2020 semester due to limited student registration. The lack of

registration was not an indication of students' [interest](#) in the course. The structure of the Beren Campus Judaic study program is one that makes registering for a Talmud class difficult. Unlike the [Mazer Yeshiva Undergraduate Torah Studies Program](#) on the Wilf Campus, which takes place from 9 a.m.-3 p.m., the Talmud courses on the Beren Campus are structured identically to secular courses. Meaning, there isn't a set time in the SCW course schedule set aside for Torah learning. This structure cannot support a Talmud course for which *seder* (preparation of the material, often done in pairs) and *shiur* (lecture on the studied material) time is required. For both Rav Kahn's, intermediate course (which meets biweekly slot for an around an hour and 40 minutes) and advanced Talmud course (which meets Monday-Thursday for around an hour and 15 minutes), students are required to put in *seder* time outside of class since the class time slot is not long enough to accommodate both the *seder* and *shiur* aspect of the course.

Students often put in an hour and a half of *seder* time before each intermediate class, and an hour of *seder* time before each advanced class. Thus, the Advanced Talmud course begins unofficially at 8 a.m., resulting in an additional weekly four hour investment of unofficial class time into the

"course" without receiving any credit. To put it into perspective, the *extra* four hours is an hour and a half more than an average three credit course of 2.5 hours a week. Aside from that, many science classes, as well as classes required for many majors, are offered at 9 a.m., preventing many students from taking the course.

In 2017, [Rav Schwartz's Advanced Talmud](#) course was established. The course met on the evenings of Monday-Wednesday for approximately five hours and 50 minutes per week. The addition of this course accommodated students who had obligatory 9 a.m. classes, as well as provided an opportunity for a Talmud course in which *seder* time is part of the time slot and does not begin at 8 a.m. While there were many students who participated in the course, a significant number of them were not able to officially register, mostly due to scheduling conflicts. [Often](#), a class a student was taking before the course time slot overlapped with the *seder* aspect of the course, preventing them from registering, but practically, the student would be able to find time to make up the few minutes they missed from *seder* and be present in all of the necessary *shiur* time. Until this issue is resolved, it will be consistently difficult to find enough students to officially register for the course to allow for its continuation.

The instability of the Talmud courses are not the only instances of regression we are seeing. Through the Beren Campus history, the presence of a [Shabbat](#) (Sabbath) [minyan](#) (prayer quorum traditionally composed of men) on the Beren Campus [fluctuated](#). Mentions of a [Shabbat minyan](#) include an article “[Still Minus A Minyan](#)” published in ‘66, and “[Shabbos Minyan Becomes a Reality...](#)” (‘66) as well as many more articles [documenting](#) the losses and start ups of the Beren Campus *Shabbat minyan*.

We are once again contributing to this prolific *Shabbat minyan* history. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the *Shabbat minyan* on the Beren Campus is no longer occurring. Thus, the hard work put in by those before us will likely need to be repeated once it is safe to do so in order to reinstate the *minyan*.

Weekday *minyanim* on the Beren Campus, as seen in a [YU Observer article](#) published in 2013 which mentions a weekly Wednesday *mincha* (afternoon prayer) *minyan*, and *Rosh Chodesh* (the start of a new Jewish month) *minyanim* as mentioned in a ‘96 article “[Rosh Chodesh Minyan Debuts at SCW](#),” are recorded in the history of undergraduate women. Just like the *Shabbat minyan*, the currently cancelled weekly [Tuesday](#) and *Rosh Chodesh minyanim* can join the ranks of articles documenting

their inceptions and terminations.

Comparably, the push for *Mechitzot* (partitions providing space for women to join a prayer service) on the Wilf Campus leaves a trail through the archives as well. There are numerous articles [expressing](#) a need to [accommodate](#) women in the Wilf Campus prayer spaces. Yet, this is once again a struggle as the restructuring of prayer spaces on the Wilf Campus to adhere to COVID-19 protocol did not initially make space for women.

Even though the above mentioned losses are understandable due to the disruptive nature of the COVID-19 pandemic, they reflect a theme in the history of YU undergraduate women. Like those who came before us, we are at risk of losing the Torah and religious experiences we have grown accustomed to over the last few years. We need to hold on to that which we inherited, and improve upon it. As the next link in the *mesorah* (chain), we need to pass down what we were given, as well as our own contributions, to the students who come after us to facilitate progress and change. The Torah, the one thing which should be a constant, relied upon at Yeshiva University, deserves to thrive.

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Archival research credit: Doniel Weinreich

## News:

### Cancellation of the 2021 Seforim Sale

By Benjamin Morris



The YU [Seforim Sale](#) has officially been canceled for this coming year, 2021, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Seforim Sale is renowned for being the biggest Jewish book sale in North America, with a diverse collection of Seforim that attracts customers from all over the world. To many the sale is more than a simple Jewish bookstore on campus, being that it is completely student-run, the sale is also known as a social event for both students who work there as well as customers, bringing a sense of community to the YU student body. The sale is known to bring in customers that span the entire *hashkafic* (Jewish philosophical view) spectrum, bringing together all types of Jews in one room. According to Eli Seidman (SSSB ‘21), who was set to be this year’s CEO, “it is so amazing to see thousands of people coming to YU every year for the sale and how much Torah and the love of Torah has

been spread because of the Seforim Sale.”

In an official statement from Seidman, he says “After much research and analysis, we have decided not to have the in-person Seforim Sale this year due to social distancing restrictions and health and safety guidelines. We explored many different options. However, given the ever-changing NYS and NYC guidelines, it was not possible to plan and host the event this year and a virtual sale was not an option. We recognize that many of our students and community members look forward to the sale every year and we hope to be back in-person for a Seforim Sale soon. Our team is continuing to look into ideas for future events and will share additional updates when they are available. We thank our community for the ongoing support of the Seforim Sale.”

The sale was supposed to be run just like every other year, in Belfer Hall from the second week of February. The upper staff team had been appointed and were attempting to find safe ways to open an in-person sale. However, it became clear a few weeks ago, that a safe in-person option would not be available. Even with a room as large as Belfer Hall (where the sale commonly takes place), social distancing remains a concern especially with the amount of prospective customers that the

sale may have. In addition, it is still unclear when YU’s no visitor policy will be lifted, meaning an in-person sale would only be available for in-person students. An online option was considered but it was too logistically and financially complicated, according to Seidman

While COVID-19 did not affect the sale itself in 2020, it did have a big effect on clean up after the sale, according to last year’s CEO Hudi Rosenfeld (SSSB ‘21). This resulted in Rosenfeld coming in by himself until April 1st to finish clean up. According to Rosenfeld, the 2020 sale was responsible for the sale of over 28,000 books equating to approximately \$740,000. “[T]he sale not only facilitates the sale of Seforim to the YU community, but I think that it is an event that many families mark on their calendar every year to take a visit and support and will miss this year,” continued Rosenfeld. “For the students, it is a place to work with friends and meet different people while spreading Torah and Judaism to the communities around us,” he concluded.

The Seforim Sale is run by approximately 100 student volunteers every year. Some people come to volunteer for the social experience, others need the extracurricular activities, but many are drawn to volunteer because they want to help facilitate the study of Torah amongst the Jewish

community. Many students who were set to work at the sale this year are disappointed to not have the opportunity this coming February. One of the students who worked in the sale in 2020, Megan Herskowitz (SCW '21) said “I really enjoyed working with the other amazing staff members and getting to see the joy on customers’ faces as they left with their new Seforim ... While I am disappointed that the sale had to be cancelled, I understand that safety comes first and that it was important to cancel the sale for the safety of customers and staff members and I am looking forward to the 2022 sale.” This sentiment was shared by many of the prospective staff. In a statement from Rafi Kapitanker (SSSB ‘22), she said “when I heard that the sale wasn’t happening this year, I was disappointed. I had a great experience working at the sale last year and I was looking forward to working at the sale again this year.”

## [Science Classes Use Different Forms of Virtual Laboratory Software](#)

**By Mili Chizhik and Shoshanah Marcus, News Editors**

With the Fall 2020 semester beginning with an online format, science departments are faced with the challenge to convert their tried and true

laboratory procedures to fit an online format.

Some courses, such as the organic chemistry laboratory at Stern College, have opted to convert their entire course to an online format. Professor Estes and Professor Deng, the organic chemistry laboratory instructors, have opted to use the program ChemLabZ to conduct all experiments needed for the course. The software comes with worksheets, which has replaced many of the lab reports that had been required in previous years. Though each lab is performed by the students individually using the ChemLabZ software, each professor provides required textbook reading, a supplemental video, and a lecture during the scheduled laboratory slot.

Laboratories such as the cell biology lab have opted to use multiple formats to optimize distance learning, and the instructors have even offered students the option to come into the lab after break. The cell biology lab has used Labster, a virtual lab experience, and Edvotek, a company that sends various materials to students' houses so that they can perform experiments at home in a safe and controlled manner. Each lab is accompanied by a corresponding lecture slideshow and a homework assignment.

While some courses require completion of the labs on virtual simulation programs,

students enrolled in either the introductory or general physics courses must attend the same synchronous lectures, and theoretical experiments are performed with pre-existing data. During a typical week, the first twenty minutes of lecture are dedicated for the weekly quiz. After the quiz, Dr. Edelman explains the theory behind the experimental topic and then the students are divided into groups to work on evaluating and analyzing the data given.

Some laboratory instructors, such as Dr. Schuck in the microbiology lab, have given students the option to work in the lab in person. Dr. Schuck provided a code to order nontoxic lab materials, such as agar plates, so that students can perform some experiments and practice various techniques from the comfort of their homes. Dr. Schuck explained that "with the use of at-home lab kits, everyone can learn crucial lab techniques and gain hands-on experience. And, with everyone doing many of the same experiments, we can feel like a more cohesive group, with everyone involved." She also explained that for those who are learning remotely and do not have access to the lab materials, the techniques "are replaced with sophisticated simulations that mimic the lab environment, or at-home activities based on teaming up with someone who is working in the lab."

The genetics laboratory at Stern College has the opportunity to have the same professor for both lecture and laboratory, Dr. Babich, so he is able to fill in the gaps of information between the lecture and laboratory as needed.

For students taking courses such as anatomy and physiology, which are highly dependent on the visual understanding that comes with the laboratory portion, the rise of technical issues has become increasingly frustrating. "Anatomy lab is similar to the lecture in the sense that we have slides, but it is a little more visual. Professor Mollin said we may have in person dissections but I'm not sure when or how that will work so that is frustrating," Bina Davidson, SCW '21, shared with the *YU Observer*. "For physiology we also have lectures but we also have virtual lab simulations through Labster. I really don't like the program because there are a lot of technical difficulties. It's always crashing, The instructions aren't clear, and if you don't perform the task exactly as the program wants you to, the program won't let you continue to the next step," she continued.

In order to gauge student response to the labs being done virtually, a survey was conducted in September, with 53 out of the 100 respondents having taken science lab courses prior to the Fall 2020

semester. The following lists the percentage of which courses those 53 people are currently taking in current semester: 4.3% biology lab, 14.9% organic chemistry lab, 10.6% physics lab, 10.6% genetics lab, 17% cell biology lab, 14.9% anatomy lab, 4.3% physiology lab, 17% microbiology lab, while 34.1% are not taking any labs.

When asked about how different or similar the labs are this semester compared to previous semesters, 49% thought they are different, 17% thought they are similar, and 34% thought they are neither different nor similar.

When asked about the difficulty of the labs this semester compared to previous semesters, 14.9% thought that they are easier, 31.9% thought they are more difficult, while 53.2% found that they are neither more difficult nor easy.

When asked about the readiness of the professors' teaching this semester's virtual labs, 40.4% of the students thought they are prepared, 21.2% thought they are unprepared, while 38.3% thought that they are neither prepared nor unprepared.

Lastly, when asked about the clarity of the lab professors' teaching styles and the requirements for this semester's labs, 25.5% of the students thought they are clear, 36.1% thought they are unclear, and 38.3% thought that they are neither clear nor unclear.

## SCW General Education Requirement Change

By Mili Chizhik, News Editor

The Stern College for Women (SCW) Curriculum Committee recently convened to simplify the SCW [General Education requirements](#), with the intention of helping and enabling students to have an easier time choosing courses, shared Dr. Karen Bacon, the Mordecai D. Katz and Dr. Monique C. Katz dean of undergraduate faculty of arts and sciences, with the *YU Observer*. The Curriculum Committee decided that two of the previous general education requirement categories, “Foundations of History, Philosophy & Social Sciences” and “Contemporary US and Global Perspectives,” will be merged to form a single new category — “[Foundations and Contemporary Perspectives of History, Philosophy & Social Sciences](#).” On Tuesday, November 10, Meirah Shedlo, an academic advisor and special projects manager, sent out an email describing these new changes and attached a new [PDF](#) highlighting the change.

Upon graduation, SCW students must have completed a wide range of courses, including those that fall under the categories of “Foundations of History, Philosophy & Social Sciences” and “Contemporary US and Global Perspectives.”

[Originally](#), students were required to take two courses from two different areas to fulfill the former category, including Economics, History, Philosophy, Political Science, Psychology, and Sociology. Similarly, to fulfill the latter category, one must take two courses from two different areas, including Economics, History, Philosophy, and Political Science.

Many students feel that these requirements are repetitive and are disadvantageous to students. Rachel Jacobi (SCW '21) says that “I think these categories are redundant and should be combined. My experience with this was that I had all my ‘foundations’ requirements filled by grad school courses that I needed, and an AP US history class that technically fell under ‘foundations.’ They refused to let me put those credits towards the ‘contemporary’ requirement, even though there are scores of other similar history courses that are categorized as ‘contemporary.’”

Due to the overlap of the courses and the confusion, the Curriculum Committee decided to [combine](#) these two categories into a single new category known as “Foundations and Contemporary Perspectives of History, Philosophy, & Social Sciences.” Effective immediately, students would instead be required to take four courses from four different

areas, including Economics, History, Philosophy, Political Science, Psychology, and Sociology. Although this change is effective immediately, Dr. Bacon explained that “[c]urrent students can follow either the current or new guidelines, whichever works best given what they have already taken.”

Dr. Bacon described that “the consolidation of the two categories maintain the breadth that is characteristic of a liberal arts curriculum while making the choice of courses less confusing to students.” She continued to share that the academic advisors are working on an updated information sheet.

### [Dr. Sara Asher Newly Appointed as Assistant Dean of Students for the Beren Campus](#)

**By Shoshanah Marcus, News Editor**

Dr. Chaim Nissel, vice provost for Student Affairs, welcomed Dr. Sara Asher as the newly appointed Assistant Dean of Students in an email sent out to students on November 16, 2020.

This appointment follows recent changes to the administration. This past summer, [Rabbi Dr. Josh Joseph](#), former senior vice president of Yeshiva University, was appointed executive vice

president (EVP) and chief operating officer (COO) of the Orthodox Union (OU). About a month later, on August 7, 2020, Dr. Chaim Nissel, the former dean of Students, was promoted to the role of [vice provost for Student Affairs](#).

In his email sent to students, Dr. Nissel invited the Yeshiva University community to welcome Dr. Sara Asher as the new assistant dean of Students. Nissel stated that Asher’s responsibilities will include “oversee[ing] the areas of housing and student life as well as other aspects of the student experience on the Beren [C]ampus.” Dr. Nissel further explained to the *YU Observer*: “This new role of assistant dean of students is exclusively for the Beren Campus- to provide a senior leader to direct and help coordinate the Beren [C]ampus student experience, which takes place outside the classroom.”

Dr. Asher has worked at the YU Counseling Center for the eight years, which Nissel explained in the email, “has given her an appreciation for the YU community and has provided her with the expertise to guide students in their college years and beyond.” Nissel shared with the *YU Observer*, “Having someone of Dr. Asher’s caliber involved in the various services on Beren, and available to help individual students navigate college life, will undoubtedly help enhance the student experience.”

Beyond her experience in the YU Counseling Center, as Nissel explained in the email sent to students, Dr. Asher “earned her doctorate in psychology at Pace University and has since devoted her career to helping students thrive personally and academically. Dr. Asher comes with extensive experience working in schools and in clinical settings, both as an administrator and a psychologist.”

Dr. Sara Asher can be reached at [sara.asher@yu.edu](mailto:sara.asher@yu.edu) or on the fifth floor of 215 Lexington Avenue.

### [Classrooms Technologically Fitted to Allow For Zoom Streaming](#)

By Erica Rachel Sultan, News Editor

Starting the week of October 26, YU students were allowed to return to YU campuses for [in-person](#) learning, while those who remain at home are to continue their virtual learning. Faculty who have chosen to conduct in-person learning are given new technologically fitted classrooms. Currently, there are two technologically fitted classrooms on the Beren Campus in the 215 Lexington Avenue building, as well as two classrooms on the Wilf Campus in Stanton Hall. These tech rooms include a camera,



directed toward the professor and is to Zoom for those students who are at home, and a new projector which is a touch screen. These rooms are also made to adhere to social distancing guidelines set in place by the New York State.

As these changes were put into place, students and faculty experienced technical challenges.

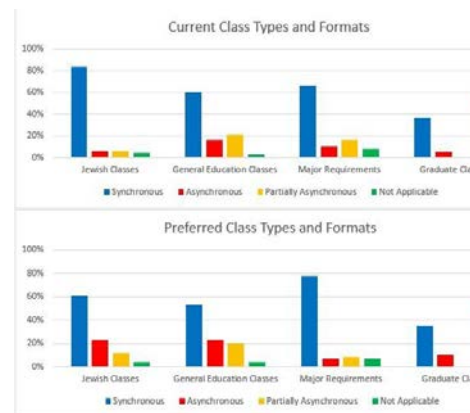
Professors could not hear their virtual students, virtual students could not see the board, and when more than one person spoke, loud screeches would come from all screens, as shared with the *YU Observer*. One virtual student, who wishes to remain anonymous (SCW '21), shared their first-day experience with the new setup, "It was just a mess. None of the virtual students could see the board and therefore we couldn't see the slides to the lecture. Our professor couldn't hear us so we would need to put our questions in the chatroom - but it's hard for a professor to teach and simultaneously look at the chatroom. The audio fluctuated from too loud to too low. I wish it could go back to just regular [Z]oom or that YU had better prepared this new system in advance so I didn't miss a class due to technical difficulties."

Faculty member, Dr. Jill Katz, head of the Sociology department and the Academic Advising Center, had a more positive take when fronted against the technical

difficulties; "While there have been a few bumps in the road, I am excited to return to the classroom. Adding vibrancy to the teaching experience, the in-person students serve as partners in bringing the class to the rest of the students who are virtual."

### Survey Results Outlines the Student Response to the Virtual Semester

By Mili Chizhik, News Editor



In late September and early October, the *YU Observer* conducted a survey to understand what the current SCW, YC, SYMS, and Katz School of Science and Health students think of the Fall 2020 virtual semester. The respondents who were not currently in any of the aforementioned YU programs were excluded in the analysis of the results. Respondents had the option to remain anonymous and the personal data, i.e. name and email, were not used for any purposes.

Out of the 100 respondents, 87% were from the Beren Campus and 13% were from the Wilf Campus. 77% percent were SCW students, 10% were YC students, one percent was from Katz School of Science and Health, while 10 and two percent were SYMS students at the Beren Campus and Wilf Campus, respectively. The class statuses of these students were the following: two lower freshmen, two upper freshmen, 17 lower sophomores, one upper sophomore, 28 lower juniors, 10 upper juniors, 30 lower seniors, 7 upper seniors, and 3 super seniors.

39.2%, 30.4%, and 30.4% current students who were students in YU during the Spring 2020 semester found the transition from in-person classes to virtual learning in the spring felt challenging, neither challenging and straightforward, and straightforward, respectively.

When asked about the transition from in-person classes to virtual learning, 39.2% thought it was straightforward, 30.4% thought it was challenging, while the remaining 30.4% thought it was neither straightforward or challenging.

When asked how much work/effort/preparation was needed in virtual classes compared to in-person classes, 34.2% thought that not a lot more work/effort/preparation was needed, 45.6% thought a lot more work/effort/preparation

was need, while the remaining 20.3% thought that neither a lot more or less work/effort/preparation needed.

30.4% of respondents said that their grades declined or were at risk of declining due to the classes being transitioned to online, however 51.9% said that their grades were not at risk of declining and improved and 17.7% reported their grades neither suffered nor improved.

When asked how much are the learning challenges in the Spring 2020 semester attributed to the professors and their teaching styles, 39.2% of students reported that they did not have learning challenges from professors, 22.8% reported that they have learning challenges due to their professors, while 38% reported partial attribution of their learning challenges to their professors.

When asked how much the learning challenges in the Spring 2020 semester attributed to the way administration dealt with the transition, 50.6% did not attribute their learning challenges to the administration, 29.1% partially attributed it to them, and 20.2% fully attributed it to them.

When asked how much the learning challenges in the Spring 2020 semester attributed to the change in academic environment/living situation, 67% reported that it was fully attributed to the living

situation/environment, 19% reported partial attribution, whereas 14% reported no attribution to their living situation/environment.

55.7% reported that last semester's virtual learning really prepared them for this semester's virtual learning, 19% thought it moderately prepared them, and 25.4% did not think it helped prepare them.

Additionally, 53.2% thought that last semester was easier than this semester's virtual learning, 24% did not find it easier, and 22.8% found it partially easier. Furthermore, 78.5% thought that there was less coursework last semester than this semester, 11.4% thought there was partially less work last semester than this semester, and 10.1% thought that last semester had more work than this semester.

The students were then asked to state whether they agree or disagree with four different statements. When asked what they thought about the following statement, "I have a lot of work and preparation required for my Fall 2020 classes," 78% of students agreed, 10% disagreed, and 12% neither agreed nor disagreed. Regarding this statement, "my instructors assign a lot of work and preparation required for my classes," 77% of students agreed, 14% disagreed, and 9% neither agreed nor disagreed. Similarly, when asked about

this statement: "my instructors are not understanding that they are assigning too much work," 51% agreed, 22% disagreed, and 27% neither agreed nor disagreed. Lastly, 55% agreed, 17% disagreed, and 28% neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement of "the administration is not being active in controlling the amount of work assigned by the instructors this semester."

At the end of the survey, there were optional questions where students could write about their [experiences](#) this semester. In addition to all the anonymous student quotes, one can find the graphs illustrate both the current class types and formats and the preferred class types and formats.

## Updated COVID Testing Protocol

**By Erica Rachel Sultan, News Editor**

On November 5, Yeshiva University undergraduate students received an email from Dr. Chaim Nissel, vice provost of Student Affairs, in regards to the new COVID-19 testing protocols. Stated in the email, starting the week of November 9, saliva PCR testing will only be offered to undergraduate students once a week, as opposed to the previous twice a week testing, as there has yet to have been any positive COVID-

19 tests since students have returned to campus. The twice-weekly protocol will remain in place for undergraduate student athletes.

However, on November 13, all undergraduate Yeshiva University students received an email from Rabbi Dr. Ari Berman, the president of Yeshiva University, stating that the campuses will continue with COVID-19 testing twice a week until Thanksgiving. After the holiday, the matter will be revisited. This comes after a surge of COVID-19 cases in the New York/New Jersey area, and after a faculty member on the Wilf Campus has tested positive for COVID-19. While the faculty member and his family must quarantine, a YU Spokesperson has stated that there is no cause to believe that anyone else on the YU campuses needs to quarantine or isolate.

Undergraduate students are able to get tested at both the Wilf and Beren Campuses. [Wilf COVID testing](#) is on Mondays and Wednesdays from 12-3 p.m. and 5-8 p.m. [Beren COVID testing](#) is on Mondays and Wednesdays from 10 a.m.-1 p.m. and 2-5 p.m. However, as these times are subject to change, one should click on the sign up links to check for updated times. Dr. Chaim Nissel, vice provosts of Student Affairs, shared with the *YU Observer* that YU is following up with students “to remind

them of their testing obligation,” and that, “[t]hose who are not compliant will not be allowed on our campuses.”

Student responses seem to differ on this new update. Elisheva Batagower (SCW ‘21), who attends in-person classes, has stated, “I think getting tested two times a week was not only nerve-racking for students, but also time consuming. While COVID testing is important, it is not necessarily a preemptive measure. And testing only once a week will allow students more time for their studies.” Mili Chizhik (SCW ‘22), who is currently attending virtual classes, has stated, “I think that generally, it’s important to enforce preemptive measures, such as social distancing and mask wearing. I think testing twice a week could potentially waste valuable resources and the time of many people.” In opposing view, a Yeshiva University student, whom wishes to remain anonymous has stated, “I think that YU is doing the responsible thing by having students tested twice a week. With the recent rise in cases in NYC, it is crucial that the university continues its testing and contact tracing programs. Measures like these will help keep both students and staff safe.”

Due to New York State traveling guidelines, “[students] may not come to campus if [they] have not satisfied the quarantine requirements. This

also means that students in our housing program will not be permitted to quarantine (following travel) in their rooms, but must find alternate quarantine accommodations off-campus,” continued the November 5 email. Students are being encouraged to stay on campus for *Shabbat* (Sabbath), and the administration is also working on organizing a Thanksgiving plan for students on campus. Keeping to social distancing rules, filling out screening forms prior to entering any Yeshiva University buildings, wearing masks, partaking in daily temperature checks, and abiding to the [Code Of Behavior](#) guidelines are all still in effect.

In response to the *YU Observer’s* request for additional information regarding YU’s COVID-19 protocol, a YU Spokesperson has stated: “When we are informed that someone on our campuses tests positive (whether through our COVID-19 Monitoring Program or through an off-campus test), we consult our Medical Director on next steps and have our trained staff conduct contact tracing. This includes reaching out to any close contacts on our campuses and advising them to quarantine, or to get tested if appropriate. We understand that last [s]pring we communicated about positive cases more widely, but we are now proceeding in a way that complies with current best

practices. Like other universities, we do not send out mass emails about all positive cases on our campuses but instead reach out only to close contacts. We also report positive cases to the NYS Department of Health (DOH) in accordance with the requirements for the public dashboard. This is the most effective way to proceed; it helps protect the health of our campuses as well as ensure the privacy of our community members.”

On the [Dashboard](#), a site run by the New York Department of Health in which students are able to see a daily updated report of COVID-19 cases their campus has, a YU spokesperson has stated: “The DOH continues to refine its Dashboard and so it has changed over the last month. Beginning on November 7th, the DOH separated Yeshiva into three schools: Wilf/Beren, Cardozo and Ferkauf, plus RIETS. As a result, the Dashboard labeled YESHIVA UNIVERSITY is no longer updated and new cases are now reported under these four schools. Since the beginning of our Dashboard reporting, we have reported a total of 3 positive cases on our campuses and have conducted 2,239 tests on our campuses as part of our Monitoring Program. But because the reporting structure has changed, the numbers appear in different places.”

In order to find the updated Yeshiva University COVID-19 information on the [Dashboard](#), click on “Higher Education Institutions,” which will lead you to type in the search bar “Yeshiva,” not Yeshiva University as was done prior to the update. You will see a dropdown window which will give you four options: Brookdale Center, Wilf Campus and Beren Campus, and Ferkauf Graduate School of Psychology, and Yeshiva University. Once you’ve clicked on the desired campus, you will be able to select a date range in which will show you any positive COVID cases which have been on the campus and new ones that have occurred during the date-range selected.

A student who tested COVID-19 positive should email their results to [covidstudentline@yu.edu](mailto:covidstudentline@yu.edu) as it can impact their participation in the testing program.

For further questions, email [CovidMonitor@yu.edu](mailto:CovidMonitor@yu.edu).

## Opinions:

### Diversity Acknowledgement on Campus

**By Sarah Brill, Science and Technology Editor**

“[Yeshiva University](#) is a unique ecosystem of educational institutions and resources that

prepares the next generation of leaders with Jewish values and market-ready skills to achieve great success in their personal and professional lives, endowing them with both the will and wherewithal to transform the Jewish world and broader society for the better.”

This is Yeshiva University’s [mission](#) statement. Nowhere in this statement does it acknowledge or, better yet, endorse the idea that there is or should be diversity on campus. For reference, let us compare YU’s [mission](#) statement to NYU’s.

“... [A]nd the university draws upon the diverse backgrounds of our faculty, staff, and students, ensuring its scholarship and teaching benefit from a wide range of perspectives. NYU takes seriously its role as an engine of social mobility, and stands out among the top US universities in its representation of low-income and first-generation students within its community.”

A few key phrases need highlighting: “teaching benefits from a wide range of perspectives,” and “NYU takes seriously its role as an engine of social mobility.” Having a diverse faculty is one of the key components that enrich a learning experience. If someone is taking a Judaic studies class and does not have a Jewish professor, the experience will not be as fulfilling. Similarly, taking a social justice and

inequality class and not having a member of a minority group as the professor will be unfulfilling.

I have heard from some students that putting “diversity” or “accepting/promoting diversity” is just a publicity stunt to get more students to attend the school. While that might be true, the student population can, at the very least, feel accepted by the university rather than feeling like an outsider when attending. Even if it is for publicity, words hold a lot of meaning. For NYU, they take social mobility as a serious matter, so serious that they put it in their mission statement. For YU, social mobility has included marching for the state of Israel and attempting to combat antisemitism within mainly New York communities. If that is the case, why doesn’t our mission statement actively make an effort to not only promote social mobility in our own community but in other communities, including minority communities, as well?

It is quite hypocritical to think that a Jewish school does not even acknowledge diversity within their own community.

Upon asking a group of YU students, male and female, if they felt there was racial diversity on campus, 100% said that there was not. When asked if the phrase “YU should aim to foster a diverse atmosphere” or a similar expression should be

added to the mission statement, 60% said it should be added, and the other 40% had reasons for why it should not be added. Anonymous, SCW ‘21, who replied “no,” said, “We don’t [foster a diverse atmosphere] so we shouldn’t say we do.” Rivka Lasson, SCW ‘21, expressed similar sentiment stating that this phrase should not be included because “It’s not really a diverse environment.”

Yosef Rosenfield, YC ‘21, stated that “Yeshiva University shouldn’t include the phrase in its mission statement if that isn’t an actual goal of the university, which it probably isn’t. YU is a private institution and therefore doesn’t owe anything to society. It need not necessarily strive to foster a diverse environment, or accomplish anything for that matter. It presumably aims to simply serve its intended audience, which likely doesn’t care about surrounding itself with a diverse environment.”

It is disheartening to see that even students at YU believe that the student population is both not diverse and that our university makes no effort in creating a diverse atmosphere.

On the opposing side, Kayla Lasson, Katz ‘24, stated that adding the phrase would “make people feel more welcomed.” In agreement, Fruma Landa, SCW ‘21, noted that the school should add the expression, “but only if they actually do that. If they do not intend to, they should skip it.” Additionally,

Devorah Gurevich, SCW 23, stated, “I think it should, but only if the administration is truly committed to doing so and not just using empty words to make the school look good. Committing to this mission requires continuous education and improvement to make it a reality.”

Across the board, students are acknowledging that there is barely any diversity in our school, and the majority stated that a phrase acknowledging or accepting a diverse student population is welcome only if the school intends to keep that promise.

It is incredibly hard for me personally as a racially mixed person to unabashedly express half of my identity in a Jewish school that chooses not to acknowledge diversity within the Jewish community. There are many Jews of color in the world, and for some reason, the Jewish community is holding an ashke-normative (a societal trend of favoring Ashkenazic Jews) mentality. My question to the school is, why aren’t more Jews of color applying to the school? Is it because of this mission statement? Is it because not only is the student population not racially diverse, but the faculty isn’t either? Is this a subconscious choice? Is the school choosing to ignore its Jews of color on campus, or is this mere ignorance? Has our school taken the approach that a Jew is a Jew and therefore, it

need not mention diversity, or do they fail to realize that this little discrepancy in the mission statement is marginalizing?

A lot of people don't recognize that while a Jew may be a Jew and we should respect them as such, there are a lot of preconceived notions surrounding the POC (People of Color) Jewish community. I have heard many Jews of color being called "converts" in the slur usage of the word on social media. I have heard people being called "fake Jews" because of the color of their skin, which is unacceptable. If the school truly takes the approach that a "Jew is a Jew," then it should have no problem inserting that phrase. This would reflect undertaking the initiative to gain a more diverse faculty and student population and allowing students to express their ethnicities openly without fear of being judged.

The Jewish community should strive to welcome everyone, convert, colored, LGBTQ+, and everything in between because it is true; "A Jew is a Jew."

Whatever the reason may be that YU has not striven to promote diversity on their campus or in their mission statement, the *YU Observer* has yet to receive a response from Renee Coker, senior director of talent management and Title IX officer.

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## The Case For Reopening The YU Inter-Campus Shuttle

**By Shani Lewis**

Our campus needs a shuttle now more than ever before. We are living in the midst of a pandemic and need to take every precaution we can to avoid contracting and spreading COVID-19. The inter-campus shuttle had been provided in past years to safely transport students between both the Wilf and Beren Campuses so students could meet up for campus events and access both Wilf and Beren amenities. As a consistent user of the shuttle, I cannot begin to fathom why the shuttle is still shut down.

The shuttle ran after school hours, so the fact that most classes are not being held in person right now is not a valid reason for it to still be closed. It cannot be because of financial reasons, because YU *raised* tuition costs last year and saved money by not running the shuttle service since March. It cannot be from the lack of students who would use the shuttle, because students have returned to both campus dormitories and many students are living in the Washington Heights area. It cannot be from

lack of need to go between the campuses, because school amenities, such as the library, are open and events, such as the recent election watch party, are taking place. This leaves only one legitimate reason: COVID-19.

While COVID-19 is a legitimate reason for closing down many things, it is not a rational reason for not reopening the shuttle. The school cannot open its amenities, host events and expect students to travel between the campuses safely by utilizing the MTA subway system. Although the subway ridership numbers have decreased in recent months, there is still a substantial number of people using the subway system everyday. In fact, MTA reports the number of riders that are using the train system for each day of the week, and there are more than a million riders using the subway on any given weekday. How can YU actually believe that allowing students to use the subway system is safer than using the shuttle? YU cannot track the hundreds of thousands of strangers and homeless people that take the subway each day, many of whom are statistically positive, but YU can track all of the students who go to YU events, enter YU buildings, and, if reopened, ride the YU shuttle. How can it possibly be safe for students to attend events and use the same amenities when YU is subjecting students to the health risks of the subway system in order to do so? YU is

withholding the use of a safer transportation option in the name of COVID-19. That statement is an oxymoron.

It is especially important for the shuttle to be open and available to the Beren student body. Many Beren campus students have [noted](#) their preference of the Wilf Campus library over the Beren one. However, in order to use the Wilf library, a person needs to be properly social distancing and [testing](#) negative every 2 weeks. This puts the women who live on the Beren Campus at an extreme disadvantage since the only way for them to get uptown is to use the subway. How are women expected to be testing negative every 2 weeks if, in order to get to the library, they have to use the subway system? Additionally, even if they do test negative, how is the school expecting them to remain negative within the 2 week span when they are taking the subway there and back, potentially everyday? If anything, not having the shuttle is putting every student at risk. Students are going to travel between campuses whether the shuttle is available to them or not. YU cannot safely open the library or hold any event in a safe environment if the students have to take transportation that is exposing them to potentially millions of people.

The shuttle was originally implemented as an amenity on campus in order to provide safe and easy transportation to the

YU student body. The shuttle's purpose is necessary now more than ever. If the safety of the student body is absolutely essential to the YU administration, there should be no reason why a safe form of transportation should be withheld from its students. By withholding a safe transportation option from students, the YU administration is subjecting by extension the entirety of the student body to an unsafe environment. [YU was the first college in New York](#) to have a positive case of COVID-19; if YU reopens the shuttle, we can avoid being the next college to have a major outbreak.

## [New York's New Look](#)

### **By Eli Saperstein**

New York City, one of the greatest cities in the world, is empty. It has been empty for months. People around the world have seen the “ghost town” street photos of Times Square and other landmarks. They have heard the ongoing coverage of news stories about people leaving New York City, and even New York State in large numbers since the start of the pandemic in mid-March. At first, people fled the city because infection rates were soaring, hospitalization rates went through the roof, and people left thinking they would come back “in a few weeks” when things would be back to normal, and sanity will prevail.

We were promised a return to normalcy once we “[flatten the curve](#)” as was said every day when we watched the daily news briefing from state and local officials. We remained in our homes, scared to go out, unless we heard a rumor that a particular store had the new valuable commodity — toilet paper.

We are now many months into the “New Normal”; as we prepare to leave our homes every day, we check for our wallets and purses, car keys or metro cards, and we put on our face masks. We are used to this, and frown upon those we see who are not adhering to the rules.

New York City, the once center of the universe, the beating heart of the USA, has not come back. While living conditions are stable, and we no longer bang our pots and pans at 7:00 p.m. for our brave first responders coming out of mostly empty hospitals, the city remains a dry husk of a shell.

Why are all the folks that went to the Hamptons, Florida, their second homes in New England, and elsewhere still staying away? While it is easy to blame the evening news for showing BLM riots and the boarded up storefronts of 5th Avenue, the real reason is deeper. The folks that planned on coming back “eventually” are feeling the sense of unease that we who stayed all feel, that our elected officials have moved away from

being held accountable by their electorate, to a new norm of being able to make laws by executive order. We are now not in the same situation we were in March — faced with an unknown invisible terror, we gave up our rights with frightening rapidity, in a manner that has no comparison. We watched in horror as our elders were locked in nursing homes, with family and advocates not allowed to hold a dying relative's hand. We saw extreme examples of what the government was able to do when "we the people" could no longer question an official.

We are now at the point where the virus is more understood, where we have therapeutics and a better understanding of how to care for the infected. Our government in New York though, seems to enjoy the power they wield, and find every excuse to move the goalposts and keep the fear alive. When we started the lockdown, we did this so as not to overwhelm the hospitals. Every day we were given the numbers for the past 24 hours, how many deaths, how many patients on ventilators (which we were always on the verge of running out of), how many hospitalizations, and how many new infections. Our state government relished their new found power, and got to decide what businesses were deemed essential, and what businesses would be shut down, dooming most of them to bankruptcy

with the inability to afford to reopen.

We are now 300 plus days into the pandemic and the World Health Organization has [stated](#) that, "We in the World Health Organization do not advocate lockdowns as a primary means of control of this virus." This is echoed by [President Trump](#) who said months ago that "WE CANNOT LET THE CURE BE WORSE THAN THE PROBLEM ITSELF."



So why are we in New York still locked down?

New York remains in suspended animation, bleeding valuable revenues and even more valuable high net-worth individuals. [Moving companies](#) are reporting record business, UHaul companies are relocating trucks to accommodate the incredible demand of citizens fleeing a once great center of theater, gastronomy, and high society.

Why is everyone that can afford to leave, leaving?

Our state governor and mayor are not on the same page. While governments in other states are cooperating, Governor Andrew Cuomo and Mayor Bill de Blasio decided not to cooperate

with each other. Any time the mayor says something about the city unlocking or locking down something, our governor holds a press conference and says that matter is under HIS purview, and HE gets to decide. This would be comical, but peoples' lives and livelihoods are on the line, and are being used as political pawns in the power struggle between Cuomo and de Blasio.

While disregarding the death toll in the nursing homes, Cuomo has published a book crowing about his leadership skills, and he seems to be doing everything he can to deflect from his poor performance and even worse decision-making by saying he is following the science.

This changed in the last few weeks.

Facing the prospect of losing his power as the infection rates went down, and fearing continuing questions as to his executive order condemning nursing home residents, Cuomo has further moved the goalposts, and targeted very narrow segments of society, and claiming these new issues need to be addressed before we can finally (maybe) go back to normal. The [rules](#) he created called for Red/Hot Zones with concentric circles of Orange and Yellow zones, and would allow for new closures of school and businesses he deemed non-essential, forcing businesses that finally reopened to close



again. The science made no sense. Zip codes create no geographical borders, and instead of containing infection, the closures of local stores and *shuls* (synagogues) force the occupants to go across the street into an adjoining zip code with open stores, schools and *shuls*, furthering the potential for further spread.

In the past Cuomo's leadership and his handling of the pandemic had New York showing consistently better numbers than all the surrounding states. As these hotspots began to flare, Cuomo felt the need to suppress these outbreaks by any means necessary. To go full force with this cluster initiative. After community leaders and activists questioned this new arbitrary set of rules (again, created by the continuing emergency powers and executive order), Cuomo has admitted that he is not using science as he had previously, and that he is [admitted](#) that, "it is a fear-driven response."

"I am 100% frank and candid," [Cuomo shared](#). "This is not a highly nuanced, sophisticated response. This is a fear-driven response. You know, this is not a policy being written by a scalpel. This is a policy being cut by a hatchet. It is just very blunt. I did not propose this. It was proposed by the mayor in the city. I am trying to sharpen it and make it better. But it is out of fear. People see the

numbers going up—"Close everything! Close everything!"

The maps detailing the red zones and surrounding areas were published on Monday, October 12. These zones correlated with heavily Jewish areas. Cuomo's reasoning was that since the infection rates were not the same throughout the state, he focused exclusively on zip codes with a higher percentage of COVID-19 positive tests. While targeting very visible areas in New York City, he ignored whole counties and college areas that had much higher infection rates, as it didn't fit his narrative.

The so-called hot-spots have cooled down. People in these areas simply didn't test unless they felt sick. This led to artificially higher numbers. Once the citizens in the hotspots realized this, they went to get tested, and immediately dropped the numbers to where they could not be singled out as the cause of New York State's problem.

As of October 24, the areas in the red, orange and yellow zones in the religious areas are at astonishing lows, as areas in Broome County, Steuben County and Chemung counties continue to skyrocket. You do not hear about this on the news, as it doesn't seem to matter to the governor, as it does not let him and de Blasio exert power where it is visible and matters — New York City.

Living in New York has become increasingly difficult for everyone since March. We "tough New Yorkers" rose and overcame the challenge of being the epicenter of the COVID-19 pandemic. We are now leaving our bunkers and see everywhere else start to open, everyone else resuming daily life while in New York we are told to obey more and more laws — not created by science, but of an admittedly fear based response. This is growing tiresome. What is worse is the comments made by Mayor Bill de Blasio, comments explicitly [targeting](#) the Jewish community as being the cause of rising infections, and (for now) being the sole obstacle against reopening. That may well be justifiable in the past, when the infection percentage rate was five times that of the rest of New York, but it is not the case now, and not helping the already tense situation in any constructive way. Creating a slideshow with pictures of the Jewish people congregating might be justifiable, but the photo used on a new briefing was from 2006, and from an event taking place in [Orange County](#) — not New York. This blatant antisemitic leaning of the governor and mayor was further brought into focus and questioned as there were no photos of other gatherings like BLM marches, and other areas in New York City with higher infection rates that are not being targeted.

It has been only eight months, but New York is now on life support. All the life experiences that were here: theatre, the arts, the food, the people are all gone. By going remote, we have learned we can do our work from a home in a more rural area, where the government really does not care to micromanage how you pray, how close you walk to your neighbor, and where people get to exercise good judgement and weigh the risks of how they wish to live.

Real estate in New York City — will it ever recover? Will people need to travel two hours each way every day to work seven hours at a desk with a computer setup and email/slack that is remarkably similar to the setup they have at home? Do we need to fill out a form on our tax return and pay more of our income for the privilege of working in the city? It seems a lot of people are rethinking their fixation with New York City, and the style of governance in our city and state is not helping its revival.

R.I.P. NYC, your elected officials have finally sedated the “city that never sleeps.”

## Armenia and Azerbaijan: Old Conflict, New Stakes

By Alexandra Tolmasov

The year 2020 has brought many atrocities with it, one of

them being the devastating war between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the Nagorno-Karabakh region. Thankfully, a peace deal has been accepted by Armenia and Azerbaijan on November 9, 2020. However, many people are uninformed about the conflict and the Nagorno-Karabakh region’s importance to Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Most people worldwide are hearing about the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the region of Nagorno-Karabakh for the first time. However, Armenia and Azerbaijan have clashed for years over this region, currently recognized as part of Azerbaijan, but controlled by ethnic Armenians.

When Armenia and Azerbaijan were conquered by the Red Army in the 1920s, Joseph Stalin placed the majority-Armenian region of Nagorno-Karabakh into the control of Azerbaijan. Even though both Armenia and Azerbaijan weren’t pleased with this arrangement, it didn’t matter much at the time since they were both members of the Soviet Union. However, when the Soviet Union started collapsing in the late 1980s, residents in Nagorno-Karabakh voted to become part of Armenia. While Armenia was pleased to gain back the region that was historically Armenian, Azerbaijan had no plan of losing the region of Nagorno-

Karabakh. This provoked a devastating war between the two countries over the region. The war between Armenia and Azerbaijan ended with a truce in 1994, which left Nagorno-Karabakh as part of Azerbaijan. However, a self-declared republic of ethnic Armenians, backed by the Armenian government, has governed the region. Therefore, clashes between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the Nagorno-Karabakh region continued.

In August 2019, Mr. Pashinyan, the prime minister of Armenia, told ethnic Armenians assembled in Nagorno-Karabakh that Karabakh is Armenia. This remark angered Azerbaijan. Moreover, in spring 2020, an election was organized by the self-declared Armenian government in Nagorno-Karabakh, aggravating Azerbaijan.

In July of this year, clashes started at the Armenian-Azerbaijani state border between Armenian Armed Forces and Azerbaijani Armed Forces, killing more than a dozen people. The fighting provoked thousands of people in Azerbaijan to demonstrate in favor of going to war with Armenia.

The latest conflict started on September 27. Armenia said that Azerbaijan fired the first shots on Nagorno-Karabakh. Azerbaijan said it was launching a “[counter-offensive](#)

[in response to military provocation.”](#)

The war between Armenia and Azerbaijan in 2020 was different from previous conflicts between the two countries. For the first time, Turkey directly engaged in the dispute supporting Azerbaijan, which turned this local conflict into a regional conflict. Moreover, the scale of the fighting was larger compared to previous conflicts between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Both sides used drones and long-range artillery.

The military conflict came to an end on November 9 when both sides agreed to sign a peace deal brokered by Russia. The peace deal brought to an end six weeks of the devastating war, which killed thousands of people and left many more displaced.

Under the terms of the agreement, Azerbaijan retains control over territory that it gained control over during this conflict, and Armenia must withdraw troops from those areas. Russian peacekeepers that will monitor the truce replace the Armenian troops previously occupying the area. Moreover, Armenia agreed to open a transport corridor for Azerbaijan through Armenia and allow the United Nations to oversee the return of the internally displaced people.

After the settlement was sealed, protests immediately erupted in

Armenia, reflecting the unhappiness of the Armenian people with the agreement. Armenians accuse their government of surrendering to Azerbaijan and relinquishing territory that they consider to be part of their ancestral homeland. We can only hope that the hostility over the new arrangement will not turn into a new bloody conflict.

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## The 2020 Election as it Stands

**By Sarah Brill, Science and Technology Editor**



With the 2020 election season drawing to a close, the

American population restlessly awaits the results. It is important to note that there are a few key details about this election that might differ from previous years. For one, [66,322,813](#) voters across the United States have requested a vote-by-mail ballot with all the states accepting these ballots. It is also [known](#) that 44% of Democrats requested their ballots by mail whereas only 25.7% of republicans requested their ballots by mail which could lead to three possible outcomes. The first being that after the polls close this evening, November 3, President Trump claims victory from only the polling numbers but discovers on November 4 that a considerable number of ballots have been counted from the mail and show a swing towards Biden, offering him, Biden, the position as president. The second being that former Vice President Joe Biden claims victory over the polling booth numbers and the mail-in-ballot numbers. The final option being that Trump wins both the polling numbers and the mail-in-ballots, but seeing the projected numbers as of earlier today, it is very unlikely for this third scenario to occur. For all of these options, it does seem that by popular vote, meaning votes cast by the people on or before election day, lean in favor of Joe Biden. Regardless, it is up to the electoral college, or the count of states and their political affiliation, which will

determine the outcome of this election.

Let us be reminded that while Hillary Clinton, presidential nominee of 2016, won the popular vote by 2.87 million votes, she still lost the election due to the electoral college swaying in favor of President Trump. In order for a candidate to win the electoral college, they must gain 270 points. Points refers to the amount of weight a certain state holds. For example, California holds 55 points while Colorado only holds 9. This is determined primarily by how large the state is. This means that if Joe Biden wins California, as he is projected to do, and Trump wins the now swing state of Texas, President Trump will be trailing Joe Biden in electoral college votes by 17 points.

Swing states in this election could be the deciding factor of whether a candidate wins or loses. Swing states are those in which could either be democrat or republican in a given year. For this election, the [swing](#) states are Arizona, which has been republican in the past with the exception of Bill Clinton's election, Iowa, Ohio, North Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Nevada, Texas, a historically republican state, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Pennsylvania, and New Hampshire. Let's touch on Arizona and Texas for a moment. These are both states

to watch since they both hold high point counts in the electoral college, and both these states have historically voted red. As of November 3 at 4:47p.m. in Arizona, former Vice President Biden led President Trump by 5%. In Texas, President Trump led by a very close margin of 1%. Pennsylvania, Michigan, Texas, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, Ohio, Iowa, and Arizona are all states who turned red in the 2016 and are states that much attention is being paid to in addition to the historically red states.

This election is pivotal for both parties and it is quite historic as many of the states that are swinging this year have not in the past. It also holds significance as whoever is elected will be thrust into another wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. Needless to say, this election will be one to remember, so keep your TV and your election updates on, the votes are starting to be tallied.

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## Amy Coney Barrett: A Colossal Mistake

By Sarah Brill, Science and Technology Editor



Amy Coney Barrett was nominated for associate justice of the Supreme Court of the United States of America by President Trump on September 26, 2020. On October 27 2020, she was sworn in. Being a Supreme Court justice is a lifetime appointment and after [Ruth Bader Ginsberg](#) passed away on September 18 2020, President Trump was anxious and quick to fill the seat despite Ginsberg's last wishes to have her seat replaced after the election had been called. Barrett has received vehement opposition from liberals and rightfully so.

Let's break it down. One issue Amy Coney Barrett has attempted to litigate is abortion rights. In 2016, Barrett was a member of an organization called "Right To Life" which

has been criticized on multiple occasions for misleading vulnerable women with false information whilst they attempt to seek abortion. She has also called the court ruling of *Roe V Wade* an “[erroneous](#) decision.” Barrett, like many politically rightwinged people, does not support the concept of pro-choice. Pro-choice is the ability for a woman to have complete control over her body. No one should be forced into a pregnancy if the woman was raped, the woman’s life could be at risk, or the woman’s child could suffer or die. There are many other examples where abortion is acceptable, but it seems that the “right” does not understand that. If they cared about pro-life, I think they might want to care about the woman who is carrying the fetus rather than the fetus that is not formed. “[Judge](#) Barrett has defended herself on multiple occasions against charges that her religious faith might influence her in court. ‘I would stress that my personal church affiliation or my religious belief would not bear in the discharge of my duties as a judge,’ she once said.” Unfortunately her statement, whilst amicable in writing, is not true.

With regards to LGBTQ+ rights, Barrett, on multiple occasions, has refused to denounce prior writings and statements which, if

implemented, could lead to a regression in LGBTQ+ rights. “[Barrett](#) has demonstrated hostility toward LGBTQ+ rights in her words and rulings. She [defended](#) the Supreme Court’s dissenters on the landmark marriage equality case of [Obergefell v. Hodges](#), questioning the role of the court in deciding the case.” Additionally, she stated that Title IX protections, a harassment claim, does not extend to the transgender community. When asked whether she would uphold LGBTQ+ rights, she responded and [said](#) “I would not discriminate on the basis of sexual preference.” A seemingly innocent phrase with a Freudian slip locked into her response. Sexual preference is an outdated term that implies that people within the LGBTQ+ community have a choice of whether to be gay or not, for lack of a better phrase. Barrett, while again her intentions were amicable, she succeeded in answering the worst nightmares of the LGBTQ+ community; she will not respect them. How can a person uphold the rights of an entire community when she cannot change or accommodate her personal views?

We all are aware that President Trump will do anything to rip apart the framework of the Obama administration, so it is not surprising that he has declared Barrett a Supreme Court justice. It is also common

[knowledge](#) that Trump wishes to get rid of the Affordable Healthcare Act (ACA) leaving 23 million Americans without healthcare. Barrett could be the stepping stone towards that goal: in 2017 she opposed the ACA, then ObamaCare, critiquing John Roberts who famously voted to preserve the ACA. Because of her opposition in the past, she poses a true threat to those currently on the ACA.

Needless to say, this article barely scratches the surface of what Supreme Court Justice Amy Coney Barrett is capable of doing, but there is this phrase I saw on the internet that best fits her actions, and her possible course of actions: [Barrett](#) will walk through all the door Justice Ginsberg opened, just to shut them all behind her and I think that is true.

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## Two Years Later, Reflecting On The Tree Of Life Shooting

**By Susan Jacobs Jablow,  
1998-1999 Editor in Chief of  
the *YU Observer***

*Susan Jacobs Jablow is a 1999  
SCW graduate and a former  
editor-in-chief of the YU  
Observer.*



On the morning of October 27, 2018, I was doing what I typically do on *Shabbos* (Sabbath) morning — walking to *shul* (synagogue) with my kids. When we stepped outside our front door in Pittsburgh’s Squirrel Hill neighborhood, it felt like a regular fall *Shabbos*. It was cool and raining lightly. We were running late, and I was anxious to get moving.

The walk to *shul* takes about 15 minutes. That morning it felt much longer. Almost immediately as we walked, we heard sirens. My kids, who were then nine and six, wondered what was going on. Since we live in an urban neighborhood, it is not uncommon to hear sirens, so at first I dismissed them. Very quickly though, it became clear that something was terribly wrong. By the time we reached Murray Avenue, the main artery of our neighborhood, we saw fire department vehicles, ambulances, and unmarked police cars streaming past us, all with sirens blaring.

Squirrel Hill is the heart of Pittsburgh’s Jewish community, home to synagogues from across the Jewish spectrum. The *shul* we belong to, Shaare Torah Congregation, is just one mile from Tree of Life synagogue, the building that was plunged into the international spotlight — and history — that morning, as it became the site of the United States’ deadliest antisemitic attack.

We felt alarmed and scared, but didn’t know what had happened until we arrived at Shaare Torah, and were informed that an “incident” had occurred at Tree of Life. By the time services ended, we knew that 11 innocent people had been murdered.

Looking back, it feels surreal that we lived through this, but as I write this around the two-year anniversary, the shock, fear, and disbelief I felt come back to me. Viscerally, I remember the horror of that day, and how it changed us.

Before then, our community had some security measures in place but many *shuls* still had unlocked doors and no guards. Now, every *shul* has a visible security presence, as the vague possibility of an attack morphed into the stark recognition of our vulnerability, and the reality that antisemitism is on the rise. In this sense, Pittsburgh is no different than any other Jewish

community in the United States. But at this time of year, at least, the shooting at Tree of Life is not merely a painful memory or a wake-up call, but a reality we revisit with a sadness that is palpable. It happened here. It hurts us still.

In early 2020, just before *Purim* (a Jewish holiday) and the eerie shutdowns of the pandemic, I wrote an essay about my experience on October 27, 2018, which was included in the recently published anthology [“Bound in the Bond of Life: Pittsburgh Writers Reflect on the Tree of Life Tragedy.”](#) It is a great honor to be included in this book, along with newspaper journalists who covered the shooting, as well as academics, historians, and writers in our community. Together, our reflections are a multi-faceted record of that horrible day and its aftermath.

When I sat down to write my essay, I thought about how I could expand upon a personal [blog](#) post I wrote the day after the shooting. I realized I wanted to talk about how observing *Shabbos* had been both a challenge and a comfort that day.

It was a challenge to not be able to turn on our phones to monitor the unfolding news story. There we were in the middle of a story that was being followed around the world, but without access to information for ourselves. That *Shabbos* felt incredibly long and

isolating, as we wondered and worried what other developments were occurring. We knew that family members who are not observant, or who live in areas where *Shabbos* ends earlier, would worry about us. It was awful not to be able to speak to them.

However, *Shabbos* that day was also a comfort, as it shielded our children from frightening details and enabled us to speak to them at length about our questions and fears. The rhythms of *Shabbos* sheltered and guided us that day. In retrospect, I realized that observing *Shabbos* was also an act of defiance in the face of the day’s events. An antisemite set out to kill us and desecrate our way of life, but we persevered in honoring and observing *Shabbos*. We survived. We will go on.

Two years later, we are still here, still observing *Shabbos* every week as our community continues to heal.

## [Kristallnacht: From Broken Glass to a Brighter Future](#)

**By Jacob Leichter, Staff Writer**



This month, on November 9 and 10, marks the 82nd anniversary

of Kristallnacht, or the Night of Broken Glass. As history continues its slow crawl forward, it is important to remember the tragic events of Jewish history and to recognize their irreversible effects on the Jewish world of yore. However, it is also essential to appreciate that newfound beauty and growth can and has emerged from the ruin, as is evident in the State of Israel and in the vibrant Jewish communities across the globe.

While the Jews of Germany had been suffering under Hitler’s antisemitism since 1933, and later, the Jews of Austria in March 1938 and the Sudetenland in October 1938, much of these hardships were nonviolent and relegated to the legislative world. Such policies grossly limited Jewish educational, vocational, and social opportunities but never brought physical harm to the minority group in these locales.

By late October 1938, the Gestapo, the Nazi secret police, had begun deporting Polish-born Jews from German lands back to their native Poland. Among the 17,000 deportees were the parents of young Herschel Grynszpan, a 17 year old living in Paris, who were stuck on the German-Polish border after Poland denied them and others entry. Grynszpan, desperate to free his parents from their plight, requested a meeting with Ernst vom Rath,

the German ambassador to France, at the German embassy on November 7, 1938. At their appointment, the teen shot von Rath who succumbed to his wounds on November 9.

At a meeting in Munich that same day, Joseph Goebbels, the infamous head of Nazi propaganda, addressed his fellow “Old Guard” members, instructing them that no demonstrations should be explicitly organized but that any retaliation against the Jews for the death of vom Rath should not be stopped either. Those officials sent word to local leaders throughout the Reich, calling for attacks on Jewish communities. Violence broke out on the evening of November 9 and continued into the early morning of November 10. Countless Jewish homes were broken into, an estimated 7,500 Jewish stores were looted, and anywhere from 1,000 to 2,000 synagogues were vandalized and burnt to the ground — not to mention the other religious institutions and cemeteries that were targeted in the night of rioting. It was from here, the shards of broken glass that littered the streets of the Reich, that Kristallnacht got its name. In addition to the destruction of property, German officials reported 96 fatalities on the night of November 9, though some believe that number to be in the hundreds as those injured died from their wounds in the days following. As the Nazis pinned the blame on the

victims, an estimated 30,000 Jews were arrested and sent to concentration camps in the aftermath.

Kristallnacht, which ushered in another wave of antisemitic legislation, marked a turning point in how the Nazi regime treated its Jewish subjects. The government was no longer content with passing laws that stripped Jews of their rights and hampered their freedoms in German society. Ridding the Reich of this “despised” people became a real possibility and ultimately resulted in a newfound focus for the Nazi machine as it worked to realize this goal.

Now, more than eight decades later, as those who were alive to witness the horrors of the Holocaust are passing on, it is critical that this history be remembered, due to both its importance in Jewish history and to prevent such atrocities from happening again. However, such tragedies cannot be allowed to darken the future of the Jewish people.

There exists in Japan an art form known as *kintsugi*, in which broken pottery or glass is repaired with the addition of gold or silver. The Japanese believe the mended item to be more precious than the original, seemingly perfect vessel. So too should the Jewish people be regarded. Yes, Kristallnacht and the Holocaust were horrible tragedies that saw the irreplaceable loss of life,

Judaica, and tradition. And yet, from the ashes of that destruction, vibrant communities have emerged, from the bustling metropolis of Manhattan to the pristine beaches of Tahiti. It is this diversity and renewal, the gold and silver, that have connected the shards from the Night of Broken Glass to form the beautiful Jewish world that can be seen today. As we mourn the loss of that original vessel, the mended product that has been constructed through painstaking efforts in the decades since must, at the same time, be appreciated.

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Revisiting Coed Courses in YU

**By Shayna Herszage,  
Managing Editor**

Yeshiva University prides itself on being an institution that provides single-gender undergraduate education in Stern College for Women, Yeshiva College for Men, and



the Sy Syms School of Business on the Beren and Wilf campuses. However, the strictly gender-divided colleges often create issues because the courses offered are not always balanced. Considering that classes, at least for the foreseeable future, are not going to be in-person, it may be time to rethink blurring the lines of Yeshiva University's gender separation.

To clarify, I am *not* arguing that the campuses and their respective courses should be entirely integrated. I know that Yeshiva University is not fully coed, and I do not think it should be. But what do we do when a student at Yeshiva College (YC) wants to take an education or nutrition course? The majors are markedly absent from the YC catalog. Similarly, what do we do when a student at Stern College wants to take an English course with no Beren campus equivalent? If Yeshiva University is offering the course to another undergraduate school, why should Yeshiva University provide a stumbling block in the path of a student pursuing an education and a career? In order to aid their students to the best of their abilities, Yeshiva University should consider allowing exceptions in such cases.

One of the primary arguments against allowing such mixing is that coed classes, even slightly coed, may be considered immodest. This notion must be revisited in the era of online classes because classroom socializing is no longer a factor. Students no longer talk among each other in the classroom before the professor arrives — instead, we are kept in the Zoom waiting room. After classes, we no longer interact in the hallway or cafeteria — we simply leave the Zoom call. From the beginning of the pandemic, students and professors alike have called attention to the impersonal, non-social quality of online classes. While we struggle with this issue of non-social education, Yeshiva University must take this time to grant new educational opportunities to students. If socializing among classmates is minimized as is, there is no longer a risk of possible immodesty.

Meanwhile, while single-gender classes have maintained an impersonal quality, coed online events have occurred on a regular basis as forms of extracurricular learning and socializing. Students of all colleges join serious, academic events such as the [Crisis and Hope](#) lecture series, as well as social, whimsical events such as [Trivia Night](#). While events and classes have been starkly different from each other in the past, they now take on the same

general form: people in boxes on screens. Coed events, however contested over the decades, happen on a regular basis. Considering that we already have coed events, allowing students to take online classes from the other campus when necessary would not be so strange.

Upon reading this, many may argue: if we allow some students to take an online class meant for the other campus, we may lose the divides between the colleges and ultimately become a coed university. I can assure you this would not happen. These exceptions would be exactly that — *exceptions* on a case-by-case, as-needed basis. I, for example, would not need these exceptions because I am fortunate enough to have all of the classes necessary for my majors offered through Stern College for Women. However, some students — such as those with shaped majors or those with specific career goals relevant to classes that are only offered through the other campus — would benefit from the blurring of these divisions.

Allowing for exceptions to cross over between schools is not unheard of in Yeshiva University. For example, some undergraduate Yeshiva University students are [permitted](#) to take classes at the Bernard Revel Graduate School

of Jewish Studies for undergraduate credit. However, these exceptions are not given to everyone. Students must be of a specific class standing, and they must obtain permission from several faculty members from both Revel and their own college. The case-by-case basis of the permitting of undergraduate students to take graduate courses provides an example of how Yeshiva University should consider handling undergraduate courses: when a relevant course is not offered in a student's own college but it is offered in another, it is in the interest of both the university and the student to consider permitting the individual to take the course.

If Yeshiva University allows students to take undergraduate courses offered on the other campus, it would be a change in tradition. However, Yeshiva University's history is filled with changing tradition — such as allowing men to be on staff for the *YU Observer*, women to be on staff for The Commentator, and women to learn Talmud, to name a few. Yeshiva University is, in itself, a new look at tradition: rather than *Torah* or *Madda* (science), Yeshiva University revolutionized modern Jewry by combining the two as *Torah U'Madda*. Rethinking the tradition of having completely gender-separate classes may be daunting, but if Yeshiva

University is acting in the interest of its students, as it should be, some adjustments are worth making.

## Features:

### Club Profile: YU Pre-Medical Society

By Bina Davidson on behalf of Features Staff

YU PRE-MEDICAL SOCIETY



*Each month, the YU Observer aims to highlight one club available to the YU undergraduate community. For the November issue, the YU Observer is highlighting The Yeshiva University Pre-Medical Society*

**Club Name:** Yeshiva University Pre-Medical Society

**Heads:** *Beren:* Mili Chizhik and Rivky Zians. *Wilf:* David Shifteh and Bryan Lavi

**Relevant Campus(es):** Beren & Wilf

**What is your club's mission statement?:** The mission of the YU Pre-Medical society is to help students who are interested in attending medical school after YU to reach their full academic goals and to have a positive experience at YU. The

YU Pre-Medical society also provides a community for Pre-Medical students to network with their fellow Pre-Medical peers.

**Why is this club important?:** Being a Pre-Medical student at YU is a very challenging and stressful experience that can often leave one feeling alone and unsure of how to best navigate their Pre-Medical pathway. By providing a community for students where one can connect and network with their fellow Pre-Medical peers, we hope to help students feel less alone, as well as to provide a space where students can socialize with other Pre-Medical students to find answers and guidance for any questions and challenges that they may have or face.

**What was your pull to get involved in/start the club?:** Having received much help and guidance from other older students on how to successfully navigate through and face the various challenges that come along with being Pre-Medical students at YU, we wanted to similarly give some of our time to help other Pre-Medical students to succeed and reach their full potentials. Furthermore, we also wish to help eliminate any negative thoughts and disinformation in order to enable students to be confident in themselves. Being involved in a big community of kind and hard-working students is extremely intellectually

stimulating, as well as inspiring. Everyone comes from different backgrounds and religious denominations, but we all have the same goal: to enable our fellow citizens to receive the best healthcare possible, thus fulfilling our civic duty of supporting others.

**What are some things your club has done in the past? (If the club is not new):** Our club has held various events, as well as brought in speakers to talk to students. Last year, we brought in an MCAT prep representative to speak to students about the MCAT and how to achieve the best possible score on the exam. Additionally, we also brought in a medical school admissions representative to speak to students about interviewing for medical school. Lastly, we also organized a fair in which several medical and dental school representatives came to YU to meet with our students.

**What are some plans you have for this semester/future semesters?:** This year for the first time, the Pre-Medical Society has established a full and diverse board of SCW and YC students, ranging from freshmen to seniors, with majors in biology to history. This was done to give YU and Stern students more opportunities to be involved “on campus” and to increase the connections between our fellow classmates. We have also created a Pre-Health WhatsApp chat which is open for all Pre-

Health Students. Additionally, we will also be running a few sessions that will guide pre-medical students in the best direction, as well as provide advice from current Pre-Medical students or alumni in medical school, residency, and beyond. Lastly, we are also working to organize the annual Medical/Dental school fair which will be virtual this year due to COVID-19.

**What is your favorite OSL-provided food for club events?:** Pizza!

**With COVID, how is your club adjusting?:** As due to COVID-19, most students are off-campus, all of our events are being held entirely virtually. This includes our upcoming annual Medical/Dental school fair.

**What is your advice to someone looking to get involved on campus?:** Don’t wait too long to start getting involved on campus, but at the same time, make sure not to spread yourself too thin. Speak to other students about what extracurricular activities are available on campus — there are extracurricular activities for everyone! One’s college years should be the time that one gets to develop one’s true self, to understand what works best for them, and what they want in life. Focusing solely on academics may give you a great GPA, but you will surely lose out on so many great memories and relationships that

extracurricular activities may bring. If none of the existing extracurricular activities interest you, start a new club or chapter of something that interests you.

**Anything else to say about your club:** “At times, many pre-medical students tend to focus on the academic components of pursuing a career in medicine and lose sight of the other important factors and experiences that are essential to develop and work on. While part of becoming a successful physician requires that one must acquire a vast amount of scientific knowledge and critical thinking skills, it is also extremely important to also work on our bedside manners and how to best talk to and relate with our future patients. Through this society, we hope to emphasize the importance of succeeding in the factors beyond just purely academic and to help our students grow into future knowledgeable and personable physicians.” — *Mili Chizhik*

“If you are a Pre-Medical student, or even if you are just considering becoming a Pre-Medical student, I would encourage you to join our society. We have just created a Pre-Health WhatsApp chat that is a general chat for all Pre-Health students. So even if you are not a Pre-Medical student, if you are interested in any of the Pre-Health careers, I would encourage you to join our WhatsApp chat, where other

students will be able to provide you with answers to any questions that you may have.” –

– David Shifteh

*“As a Freshman, I was fortunate to find an upperclassman that helped guide me. I’m very excited to be able to pay that forward with this position. The Pre-Medical Society will be a great asset to all Pre-Medical students, especially the younger ones, and will serve as a tool to help guide our students through their Pre-Medical journeys.” —*

*Bryan Lavi*

*“At previous club fairs, students would often approach us and be hesitant to sign up for our society because they might be freshman or maybe even students who are just not sure if they wish to become pre-medical students yet. I would tell these students that even if they are not sure yet of their career path, they should not be reluctant to sign up. The pre-medical society is great because it provides an opportunity to connect with other students in the pre-medical community, as well as offers helpful resources for pre-medical students. This support can be essential in deciding to pursue a career in medicine!” — Rivky Zians*

*Are you a YU undergraduate club head interested in seeing your club featured in a future edition? Email us at [theyuobserver@gmail.com](mailto:theyuobserver@gmail.com) with your club name and the names of the club heads*

## Staff Writer Profiles: Tamar Nicole Soussana

### By Bina Davidson on behalf of Features Staff

*Each month, the YU Observer aims to highlight some of the YU undergraduate students who have written articles for us over the course of the semester. For the November edition, the YU Observer is highlighting Tamar Nicole Soussana and Elyanna Saperstein..*

**Name:** Tamar Nicole Soussana  
**College:** SCW



**Major:** Biochemistry  
**Year:** 3rd year on campus (Senior)

**Where are you for the COVID-19 pandemic? With Whom?:** As of now, I’m staying in the 36th street dorms. But before that, I was home with my family in Los Angeles.

**Currently reading:** I recently read “Educated” by Tara Westover. I was in awe of her story and was taken aback as well by the way we may take our education for granted and how important it can be in shaping our lives and interactions.

**Currently watching:** I’m not big on watching shows or series, but right now I’m in the middle of watching “The Social Network,” a movie on Mark Zuckerberg and the beginnings of Facebook.

**Currently listening to:** I started listening to some podcasts on STEM topics. One of them is called “Dope Labs,” which is a humorous and easy to understand dissection of scientific topics. The other is called “STEM-Talk,” which involves longer interviews with a broad range of scientists.

**Favorite way to social distance with friends:** I think spending time outdoors as much as you can is the best way to be socially distant with friends. Whether that be sitting in a backyard to talk, going for a walk, or maybe a fun activity like outdoor minigolf. It’s definitely important to be socially interactive despite the pandemic.

**Any cool things you’ve done/hobbies you’ve picked up over the COVID-19 pandemic?:** I started baking a lot more since the pandemic started. The only issue is

finding enough people to eat everything I make!

**What do you miss most about your pre-COVID-19 life?:** I think I just miss being in a physical classroom. It's so hard to stay focused from the desk in my room on top of the fact that I'm missing out on the many social interactions that make a hard week at school much more bearable.

**What is your favorite thing about YU?:** I love the close knit community at YU and the opportunity to develop close relationships with professors. Throughout my time here, I've felt comfortable reaching out to various professors for advice on personal matters as well as what classes to take and future careers options. I think that this opportunity is quite unique to YU and it has been extremely helpful to me.

**What's a quote/thought/or piece of advice you have for your fellow students?:** If you find something you are really passionate about and truly love, you should try your hardest to pursue it. Don't let a letter grade define how successful you can be, because it doesn't. Rather, focus on learning what you love, and the rest surely follow.

Read some of her articles here:

<https://yuobserver.org/2020/09/an-explanation-of-the->

<https://yuobserver.org/2020/08/t>  
[he-explosive-chemistry-of-](https://yuobserver.org/2020/08/t)  
[fireworks/](https://yuobserver.org/2020/08/t)

<https://yuobserver.org/2020/08/t>  
[he-explosive-chemistry-of-](https://yuobserver.org/2020/08/t)  
[fireworks/](https://yuobserver.org/2020/08/t)

Staff Writer Profiles: Elyanna Saperstein

**Name:** Elyanna Saperstein



**College:** Touro: Lander College for Women

**Major:** Marketing/Management

**Year:** 2021

**Where are you for the COVID-19 pandemic? With Whom?:** At home, with family.

**Currently reading:** “The Prophet” by Kahlil Gibran, “On the Road” by Jack Kerouac and “Make Something Up” by Chuck Palahniuk.

**Currently watching:** Reruns of my favorite — “Bojack Horseman”.

**Currently listening to:** Shmuli Unger — “Atu”, Yungblud — “Lemonade” and “Polygraph Eyes”, Yoely Grossman — Lev Nishbar, CL — “5 Star”, Blackbear — “hot girl bummer”.

**Favorite way to social distance with friends:** Zoom Study Sessions.

**Any cool things you've done/hobbies you've picked up over the COVID-19 pandemic?:** I've been trying to read, run and write more — (and actually get homework done before the hour its due — it should count as an extreme sport).

**What do you miss most about your pre-COVID-19 life?:** Hanging with friends, (and being allowed into YU buildings).

**What is your favorite thing about YU?:** Intellectual Modern Orthodoxy.

**What's a quote/thought/or piece of advice you have for your fellow students?:**

There's this really funny quote I heard, just saying, “This is only my first life” it reminds me that everyone else in the world is struggling just as much as the next. None of us know what we're doing, none of us have had experience dealing with, well, life I guess. We should just all remember to extend that little extra piece of compassion we want people to give us — it's everyone's first life — and

just like us, everyone is trying their best to live their life with zero experience.

Read some of her articles here:

<https://yuobserver.org/2020/08/as-a-written-leaf-nickel-and-dimed/>

<https://yuobserver.org/2020/09/as-a-written-leaf-letters-from-the-earth/>

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YU Faculty Profile: Daniel Beliaevsky

### By Yosef Rosenfield on behalf of Features Staff

*Each month, the YU Observer aims to highlight a YU faculty member. For the November edition, the YU Observer is highlighting Professor Daniel Beliaevsky.*

**Name:** [Daniel Beliaevsky](#)



**Department:** Fine Art and Music

### **Educational**

#### **Background/Qualifications:**

BA — Columbia University; MA and Ph.D. in music theory and composition — NYU

**Hometown:** Milwaukee, WI

**How long have you worked at YU?:** I taught at Stern College from 2006 until 2007 and have been teaching at Yeshiva College from 2007 to the present.

**What got you passionate about your field?:** Initially, it was not by choice: I come from a family of musicians — my father and brother are both professional violinists — and my parents had me start learning piano when I was 5 years old. I started performing professionally as a teenager, soloing with orchestras and giving recitals, and I was fortunate to perform throughout the United States and in Europe. Once in grad school, I started recording CDs — my first was

the world-premiere release of composer Lukas Foss's complete piano works. This was when my passion skyrocketed: I started seeing opportunities to produce original and unusual projects. Accordingly, since that first CD recording, I've released two additional CDs and have produced two documentary films on contemporary classical composers. My most recent film, about composer David Del Tredici, examines if and how personal passions impact compositional aesthetics. This question has recently motivated and inspired my work in music performance, analysis and documentary filmmaking.

**What do you like about working at YU?:** I love working with my students — they're smart and curious, and they like to be challenged academically. My courses range from theory and practical musicianship to history, philosophy and aesthetics — and the students who take these classes motivate and challenge me, as well as each other, as we explore how music operates across these various fields.

**How has COVID-19/Zoom affected the way your classes function?:** Overall, I have been able to transition from face-to-face instruction to remote learning smoothly. The only difficulty is with practical performance courses, where the technology lags a bit and sometimes makes it somewhat

challenging to coordinate ensemble performances.

**If you could bring in any guest lecturer, alive or deceased, who would it be and what would he/she speak about?:** At the moment, I would love to bring in two living people, filmmakers Hilan Warshaw and Stephen Fry, and one deceased composer, Richard Wagner, to have a debate about the impact personal ideology has on creative output. This is a central question in my Aesthetic Revolutions course, and while Warshaw and Fry have both made documentary films about Wagner’s deeply troubling personal ideology against the backdrop of his phenomenal music, it would be illuminating to have Wagner react to contemporary views of his personal legacy and his music’s place in history.

**Do you have any advice for students interested in a career in your field?:** Develop thick skin, learn to accept rejection and sometimes unsolicited advice, and above all, be ready to hustle! Importantly — this is something that has worked well for me — I recommend looking for opportunities to develop a personal voice that contributes meaningfully to less-explored niches of the discipline.

**What is one thing you want students to know about you?:** My parents and older siblings immigrated twice. First, when it was especially dangerous to do

so, they left the former Soviet Union and moved to Israel. Several years later, they settled in Milwaukee, where I was born. I am constantly inspired and encouraged by my parents’ willingness to take risks, question the status quo and fight to live according to their convictions.

*Is there a YU professor you admire who you would like to see highlighted in future editions? Email us at [theyuobserver@gmail.com](mailto:theyuobserver@gmail.com).*

## Unlearning Institutionalized Racism with Sarah Adams-Cornell

**By Eli Saperstein, Staff Writer**

On Thursday, November 12, Sarah Adams-Cornell, an Indigenous Peoples activist, introduced herself at a Zoom event with the YU College Democrats in her native tongue and began to talk about her community’s experiences. She started us off with a history lesson, detailing the facts about how her community was targeted and manipulated by the United States government. Afterward, she transitioned to a back and forth question-and-answer style of discussion, paying homage to the traditional

methods her tribe uses where everyone has a voice and is included in the learning process.

## UNLEARNING INSTITUTIONALIZED RACISM

With Indigenous activist

Sarah Addams Cornell



Thursday, November 12th from 8-9 pm

On Zoom: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88337235801>



Sarah began by telling us the story of her people and their experiences after the American government began the assimilation process. She described how education was the primary tool used to vilify their history, and destroy their love for their culture and self, as well as how the institutions supposedly dedicated to education were places of despair. How the students who were supposedly being “taught,” were being used in experiments — from withholding nutrition to experiments involving eugenics. When the children were brought to school, many, upon realizing that the purpose was not to educate but to *re-educate*, tried to escape and rejoin their tribes. Most did not make it, and there were cemeteries built on campus for those who died trying. She cited examples of how the education system, and many others, affect them to this

day. Stereotypes originated from these institutions and their experiments, including the myth that people of color have a higher tolerance for pain. Today, this is used as an excuse to give patients of color less medication after surgery, since the “established medical practice” claims that they do not need as much.

However, she did reassure us that the system need not be burned down in order for other schools of thought to exist; she and other activists have started their own school — an “Indigenous Hogwarts,” where the students’ identities are affirmed, not condemned, where they are taught traditional medicines, de-escalation practices, and their oral traditions. They can complete their studies in compliance with the law, as opposed to being forced underground (which they were until 1978 when they were finally “legalized”).

Adams-Cornell emphasized the importance of education, and how it is the key to a better life, saying, “everything is easier with an education.” However, she noted that the dropout rate in the Native American community is the highest. There are many reasons for this, but she stressed that “while education may help financially, it does not solve any other problem.” The system is designed to be harder for those

of other cultures, specifically for those who are not used to the Western method of teaching. It is hard to learn from a system that paints you and your people as the villains. The American education system clearly has an agenda in mind with what they choose to teach. A paragraph dedicated to “The Trail of Tears,” vs. a chapter dedicated to “Manifest Destiny,” is an example of what the priorities of these institutions are — making America look like the hero of history while ignoring the importance of Native American views and history.

Adams-Cornell continued, explaining how universities were built on the eurocentric model that was considered to be superior, and how Manifest Destiny was a major principle in the foundation of these universities. However, these long-held beliefs are still held by many today. We were told about an experience that she had where an eighty-year-old woman came over to her on-campus asking why she was there. After telling her she was a student, Sarah was laughed at because the woman had thought that her people, “were not capable of higher learning.”

Nowadays, every university promotes “diversity and inclusion,” but Adams-Cornell explained how this does not inherently solve anything. Merely gathering every ethnicity into the room ensures

the room is diverse, but the power to make decisions is not held by diversity. It is held by the same few who have been making decisions the entire time. “Diversity and inclusion need to be paired with justice and transformation,” Adams-Cornell explained.

When asked what we can do to enact change on our campus, Adams-Cornell introduced us to the idea that the people in power are trying to de-radicalize demands, compromising on certain trivial issues without fixing the structural problems. She challenged us to see if, on the Yeshiva University website’s timeline, we could get a mention of the tribes who lived on the land we occupy — which for the Wilf Campus, was the Wappinger Munsee-Lenape tribe. The Beren Campus, on the other hand, rests solely on Munsee-Lenape land.

Changing the method, Adams-Cornell asked us how we think we could solve the problems we are facing, challenging us to come up with our own solution about internalized racism. We came to a consensus: “Racism and hate is not something instinctive but something that is taught.” Adams-Cornell explained that starting young, by exposing kids to different cultures and different people, helps them to grow to be more open and welcoming.

Adams-Cornell asked us about the future of our solutions



saying, “[Those are things] we can do now but what is the endgame?” We answered that the solution is to stop the “picking and choosing,” based on race, and to look at everyone equally. We then asked her, “How do we stop the picking and choosing entirely?”

Adams-Cornell answered that as the system stands today, education is not equitable, nor is it possible to make it equitable. The numbers among different ethnic groups are still not equal, and it will be 150 years for equitability at current rates. Until we have an equitable society, there will be picking and choosing based on race. In a perfect world, or until a new system could be created that would somehow allow for equitable distribution, there will not be picking and choosing; but until then, Affirmative Action and other motions to help college acceptance rates for minorities and underprivileged communities are needed to give those who have been left behind a head start.

When asked what would be a good barometer to measure fairness, she answered, “pay should be equal for doing the same jobs...this bar is too low, but it is something.”

Adams-Cornell ended by saying, “I would love it if I’m out of a job.” Meaning, that as an Indigenous Peoples’ activist, I wish that there were no more problems for the Indigenous

community, and with a final message, “there is so much hope for your generation.”

### [It’s a Thin Line: Eruv From Talmudic To Modern Culture, Seven Years Later — a Review](#)

**By Adina Bruce, Website Manager**

As the *daf yomi* (one page of Talmud studies daily) cycle nears the end of *Masechet Tractate Eruvin*, it is impressive to see the range of [topics](#) and [messages](#) writers for the *YU Observer* have extracted from the *Masechet* in the “[Daf Yomi](#)” column. All these articles have added to a legacy at Yeshiva University of engaging in a dialogue of finding meaning from the idea of an *Eruv* (an enclosure permitting items to be carried on the Sabbath according to Jewish Law).

Looking back seven and a half years ago to the last *daf yomi* cycle, the Yeshiva University Museum curated an [exhibit](#) titled “It’s a Thin Line: The Eruv and Jewish Community in New York and Beyond,” which ran from October 2012 to October 2013. In conjunction to this exhibition, a companion book titled “It’s a Thin Line-Eruv From Talmudic To Modern Culture” was

published. This publication offers a summary and reflection on the exhibitions, as well as a forum for a continuation of the discussion around the idea of *eruv*, and how it impacts and is impacted by the world we live in.

In his introduction to the book, Adam Mintz — editor of the book who wrote his dissertation on the history of *eruv* (enclosures permitting items to be carried on the Sabbath according to Jewish Law) in America — cites a segment of The Daily Show, titled [The Thin Jew Line](#), on *eruv* in the Hamptons as exemplary of the core issue of an *eruv* as a concept: “It’s real but it’s imaginary in a metaphorical way.” This question of how to think about an *eruv* is a theme that is explored throughout the book.

Starting off the book is a textual and pictographic tour of the original exhibition by Zachary Paul Levine, [curator](#) at the Yeshiva University Museum. The exhibition itself focused on the history as well as associated controversies of the New York *eruv*. It was particularly interesting to read about the history of the two *eruv* that encompass both the Beren and Wilf Campuses, as well as the historic contributions members

of the YU legacy such as [Rabbi Norman Lamm](#), Rabbi JJ Shacter and [Rabbi Saul Berman](#) had, in creating *eruv* that have been so ubiquitous to my own campus Shabbat experience.

As those who are learning *Masechet Eruvin* may tell you, the technical and halachic concepts that make up the laws of *eruv* are not easy to wrap one's head around. The particular definitions of ideas such as *Tzurat ha petah* (symbolic doorways), *Reshut ha-yahid* (private domain), *reshut ha-rabbim* (public domain) and *makom patur* (an exempt area) are all *halachic* ideas that are essential in creating a *halachic* (Jewish Law) *eruv*. In his chapter of the book, Rabbi Hershel Schachter takes the reader on a fast-paced tour of the sources that are the basis of the *halachic* canon in respect to *eruv*. From the concepts as presented in the Talmud, to the different interpretations from *Rishonim* (early commentaries) such as *Rashi* and *Tosfot*, through to modern applications that directly led to the creation such as we experience, by *Achronim* (later commentaries) such as Rav Moshe Feinstein and the Hazon Ish. In a book that sometimes explores the idea of *eruv* in more conceptual and artistic ways, Rav Shachter anchors the conversation in a

*halachic* reality, and ancient tradition.

In their respective sections, Lawrence H. Schiffman and Jeffrey S. Gurock take a historical perspective, bookmarking the story of *eruv*. Schiffman examines the *eruv* as a Pharisaic-rabbinic construct, contrasting the Sectarian reading of the Torah, which rejected rabbinic interpretation and relied only on literal interpretations. Gurock describes the creation of the New York *eruv* arising as a reaction to the spiritual crisis at the phenomenon of religiously apathetic Jews. The hope for building the Manhattan *eruv* was to decrease the transgressions of New York Jews on *Shabbat*. Both articles highlight the social context that creates a need for an *eruv* within a community. The tension of both rabbinic interpretation and *halachic* obligation is navigated through the concept of an *eruv*.

In her article on the sociological impact of the *eruv*, Blu Greenberg surveys the relationship between the Orthodox feminist movement and the establishment of *eruvim*. With the creation of early *eruvim*, women were no longer confined to their homes looking after their children all

*Shabbat*. With this new ability came a shift in role that allowed women to push for an expanded role within the community. The concept of an *eruv* is cited by Greenberg as an example of her notorious idiom, "rabbinic will finding a halachic way," and contrasted with the current inadequate halachic response to the *agguna* (women stuck in their marriage according to Jewish Law) crisis. Her personal experience of personally benefiting from *eruvim*, and linking it to her own feminist story is fascinating. As a modern day feminist, it was eye-opening to see the role *eruvim* have had on the Orthodox feminist legacy, but sobering to be reminded of issues that are not yet solved.

Architectural students Isaac Cohen, Isaac Hametz and Rachel Vassar, offer a unique perspective on the role *eruvim* have in different communities around North America. Taking us along for the ride, the three students took a road trip passing through different *eruvim* around America and examining the different ways Jewish communities use and change the spaces they live in — from the Toco Hills *eruv* in Atlanta, Georgia, which has the specific challenge of maintaining an *eruv* in a largely wooded area, to the sprawling *eruv* of Los Angeles, measuring 80 square miles, to the resourceful

Manhattan *eruv*, which takes advantage of many of the cities features, including railways, the seawall, highways, parks and walls. Through these different descriptions of *eruv* in different communities the reach of Jewish communities in the North American community is highlighted.

Each article in this collection offers a unique perspective on the topic of *eruv*, proving that there is still what to say on this often ignored boundary, that plays such a central role in many of our communities' lives. As the cycle moves on to *Masechet Pesachim*, may the conversations prompted from the study of *Masechet Eruvin* on the interactions and tensions between people and space continue.

[In Memory of Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, Zikhrono Livrakha \(may his memory be a blessing\)](#)

**By Rivky Terebelo, Layout Editor**

On November 7, 2020, Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks passed away at the age of 72. Rabbi Sacks was born March 8, 1948 in Lambeth, London. Growing up, he went to [Christian schools](#)

due to the limited amount of institutions for Jewish education in his area. By law, there needed to be a religious act of worship every day, and because of its significant percentage of Jewish students, his school let the Jews run their own services. Rabbi Sacks would go on to become a man of many titles, among them philosopher, theologian, world renown author and politician.



He attended [university](#) at Cambridge University, where he received a first-class honors degree in philosophy. During his time at Cambridge, he took a trip to New York and met Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson (the Lubavitcher Rebbe), who encouraged him to receive *smicha* (rabbinical ordination) and become a rabbi. After a few more years of schooling and completing his Ph.D., he eventually got *smicha* from London School of Jewish Studies and London's Etz Chaim Yeshiva.

He later became the rabbi of a *shul* (synagogue) in Golders Green, London in 1978 and thereafter held many other rabbinic positions. In 1991, he became the chief rabbi of Britain, representing the largest group of Orthodox Jews in the world.

In 2005, Queen Elizabeth anointed Rabbi Sacks with the title of "[Knight Commander of the British Empire](#)." This designation acknowledged Rabbi Sacks' contributions to the Jewish community and his interfaith work, and was a huge honor.

In 2013, [Rabbi Sacks](#) was [appointed](#) for professorship at [Yeshiva University](#) and NYU. "I am excited at the [opportunity](#) to teach at [Yeshiva University](#), one of the world's great institutions of higher Jewish learning and at NYU, a university of global reach and distinction," said Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks at the time of his professorship according to a [YU News blog post](#). "This dual intellectual challenge is the perfect context to take forward the project of a Judaism engaged with the world in conversation with students in one of the major centres of Jewish life."

Rabbi Sacks wrote over 30 books and hundreds of articles on morality, philosophy, faith and religion. Many of his works have received the [American National Jewish Book Award](#). He was a praised scholar, whose [depth](#) demonstrated his comprehension of the Torah's ideas and a unique understanding of human beings — a delicate balance he maintained throughout his career.

Rabbi Sacks was diagnosed with cancer about three weeks before his passing and had taken a step back from his work in order to focus on treatment. Rabbi Sacks had twice been previously treated for cancer twice; he very rarely talked about his battles with cancer and, when asked why, he gave the following explanation in an [interview](#):

“It’s very simple. I saw my late father in his 80s go through four, five major operations. This was not cancer, it was hip replacements and those things. And when you have operations in your 80s, they sap your strength. He got weaker and weaker as the decade passed. He was walking on crutches at my induction — he was alive for my induction, and that was very important to me.

“Now, my late father, *alav ha-shalom* [peace upon him], didn’t have much [of a] Jewish

education, but he had enormous emunah.... I used to watch him [while] saying *Tehillim* [Psalms] in the hospital, and I could see him getting stronger. It seemed to me that his mental attitude was, ‘I’m leaving this to Hashem. If he sees that it’s time for me to go, then it’s time for me to go. And if he still needs me to do things here, he’ll look after me.’

“And I adopted exactly that attitude. So on both occasions I felt, if this is the time Hashem needs me up there, thank you very much indeed for my time down here; I’ve enjoyed every day and feel very blessed. And if [H]e wants me to stay and there’s still work for me to do, then [H]e is going to be part of the *refu’ah* [healing] and I put my trust in [H]im. So there was no test of faith at any point — just these simple moments at which to say, ‘*b’yado afkid ruchi*’ [‘in his hand, I place my soul’]. That was my thought. And since we say that every day in Adon Olam, I didn’t feel the need to write a book about it. It was for me not a theological dilemma at all.

“I had faith, full stop.”

This statement shows the profound wisdom with which Rabbi Sacks lived his life. He reached beyond the Jewish community and touched everyone who met him. His works continue to impact the world and he will forever be

remembered. We lost a Torah [giant](#).

He leaves behind his wife and three kids, along with many thousands of students who have learned and gained from his great life.

May his family be comforted among the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem.

*Baruch Dayan Ha’emes*  
(Blessed is the True Judge).

## [Daf Yomi At Beren: Political Correctness — The Talmudic Debate](#)

**By Shayna Herszage,  
Managing Editor**

Over the past several decades, we’ve all been hearing the same societal complaint: “Everyone is too PC (politically correct) these days.” Society seems to frequently get caught straddling the line between being too forward and not being forward enough. This difficult balance is associated with an ongoing and often heated debate: should we err on the side of [caution](#), or should we opt [not](#) to beat around the bush?

It may be surprising to learn that this question existed long before we did, but [Tractate Pesachim 3a-3b](#) in fact documents this very debate among the rabbis. On 3a, the Talmud states:

דְּבִי רַבִּי יִשְׁמָעֵאל לְעוֹלָם יִסְפָּר [תַּנְיָא](#)  
אָדָם בְּלִשׁוֹן זָקֵנָה

*“It was taught in the school of Rabbi Yishmael: A person should always converse [euphemistically] using clean language.”*

This statement supports the idea that a person should speak in a more diplomatic, “politically correct” manner when discussing delicate topics, including those of an immodest, inappropriate or offensive nature.

However, in 3b, a conflicting opinion arises from a group of other rabbis:

אָמַר רַב וְאָמְרֵי לֵה אָמַר [אָמַר רַב הוּנָא](#)  
רַב הוּנָא אָמַר רַב מֵשׁוּם רַבִּי מֵאִיר  
לְעוֹלָם יִשְׁנֶה אָדָם לְתַלְמִידוֹ דְּרַךְ קִצְרָה

*“Rav Huna said that Rav said — and some say it was Rav Huna who said that Rav said in the name of Rabbi Meir: A person should always teach his student in a concise manner.”*

According to this argument, if a person is able to learn more effectively from a more concise, forward statement, such a statement is preferred — even if

it is perhaps considered taboo or politically incorrect.

Ultimately, the Talmudic passage concludes as follows:

דְּבִי הַדְּדִי גִיגְהוּ מִשְׁתַּעֵי בְּלִשׁוֹן [וְכָל הֵיכָא](#)  
כְּבוֹד

*“And anywhere that the phrases are equal, does the verse always speak employing [respectful] language.”*

Thus, being concise is important, but being respectful is essential. If a concise phrase and a politically correct phrase are equally capable of communicating something, according to the decision of this section in *Pesachim*, the more politically correct phrase is preferred.

In support of this final point, the Talmud describes an interaction that took place between Rav and two of his students:

תַּלְמִידֵי דַהוּוּ יִתְבִי קַמֵּיהּ דְּרַב [הַגְהוּ תְרִי](#)  
סַד אָמַר שׁוֹי תִינֵן הָאֵי שְׁמַעְתָּא כְּדָבָר אַחַר  
מְסַנְקֵן וְסַד אָמַר שׁוֹי תִינֵן הָאֵי שְׁמַעְתָּא  
כְּגַדִי מְסַנְקֵן וְלֵא אִישְׁתַּעֵי רַב בְּהַדְּדִי דְהָאִיד

*“There were these two students who were sitting before Rav and were weary from studying a complex issue. One of them said: This halakha [legal ruling] we are studying is rendering us as tired as a tired something else [a euphemism for a pig]. And the other one said: This halakha is rendering*

*us as tired as a tired kid. Rav would not speak with that student who made reference to a pig, as one who speaks inappropriately is undoubtedly flawed in character.”*

In the case of this anecdote, one student spoke in a disrespectful way. In order to emphasize the correlation between disrespectful language and disrespectful character, Rav refused to speak to this student.

Many people are divided on the notion of political correctness in speech and other forms of communication. This section of Tractate *Pesachim*, however, conveys a clear message: respectful language reflects respectful character and, conversely, disrespectful language is a reflection of disrespectful character — our words are microcosms of what we think, how we feel and who we are; therefore, if the same point can be made either in a way that is harsh or in a way that is kind, choose the route of being kind.

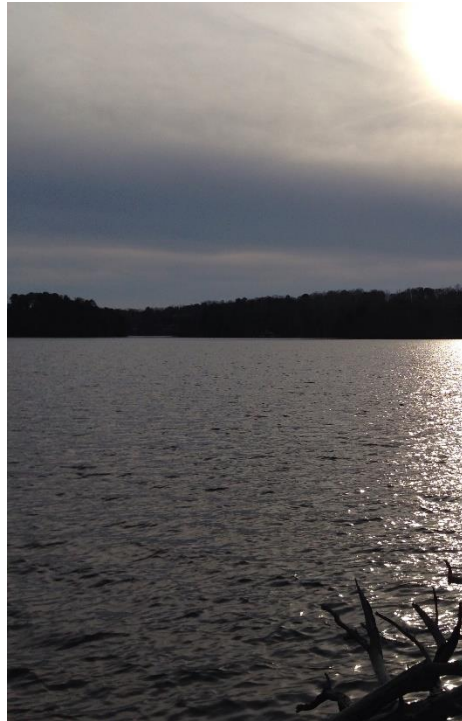
## Ghosts in the Lake?

By Sarah Brill, Science and Technology Editor

Have you ever walked into a haunted mansion and instantly regretted the decision to walk over the threshold? You find

that each room goes on for miles with no end in sight and at every turn your mental sanity is disrupted by someone screaming in your face. Well that is not what Lake Lanier in Georgia is like, but there is definitely something paranormal occurring there.

Lake Lanier is nestled in the foothills of the Georgia mountains and has a dark history. In the 1950s, when this lake was created, the community located in these mountain areas were promised by the government compensation for the property they were about to lose whilst making the lake. In the end, “[some](#) 700 families sold a total of [56,000 acres to the government](#), which built a dam on the Chattahoochee River to form the lake.” Unfortunately, the communities which live there were unable to survive on the compensation left to them from the government.



The lake itself was created by flooding all areas including a cemetery. The Army Corps of Engineers stated that they had removed all marked graves, but what happened to the unmarked graves? It was said that these graves, unable to be moved since they were unmarked, were left behind. That means that hundreds, possibly thousands, of graves were flooded in the making of this lake. To top it all off, in 1958 [a Ford Sedan carrying two women](#) veered off a bridge and tumbled into the lake. “[Some](#) say the ghost of one of the women, dubbed the ‘[Lady of the Lake](#),’ wanders the bridge at night in a blue dress, lost and restless.”

Another encounter involved Buck Buchannon, a longtime diver. He told the media that sometimes in his swims in Lake

Lanier he would “[reach](#) out into the dark and feel an arm or a leg and it doesn’t move.”

With various witness accounts and stories like Buchannon’s, it is unsurprising that the lake receives a mass amount of visitors per year. It is common knowledge never to disrupt spirits that are at rest, as the Christians would say, regardless, this lake was still created and over 200 people have drowned whilst partaking in recreational activities. This could be due to the mass amount of people attempting reckless water activities or it can be due to restless spirits growing angry at the crowds that flood their beaches.

So be warned, ghostly spirits may be hunting this popular historic lake.

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## Science & Technology:

The 2020 Nobel Prize in Chemistry

**By Tamar Nicole Soussana,  
Staff Writer**



This year, the Nobel Prize in chemistry was awarded to two female scientists, Emmanuelle Charpentier and Jennifer A. Doudna, for their work on developing a method for genome editing, known as CRISPR-Cas9. In short, this technology can edit the genome, or the genetic material of an organism, which is made up of DNA. Not only does their discovery impact the world of biotechnology and offer future therapeutic solutions to genetic diseases, it also inspires more women to enter the field of science. From 1901 to 2020, the Nobel Prize in chemistry was awarded to 185 scientists, of which 7 were women. The fact that two women were awarded the Nobel Prize this year is inspiring to me as an aspiring scientist, as well as to countless other women worldwide.

Like all scientific work, no discovery is made without plenty of previous research. Many individual findings eventually led to CRISPR-Cas9. DNA is made up of nucleotides, each having a specific partner or nucleotide pair. This contributes to the base pairing, or complementary elements, of DNA. In 1987, scientists reported repeating base pair

sequences, or blocks of DNA with the same nucleotide pairs, in the DNA of *Escherichia coli*. It was eventually found that these repeats were common in prokaryotes, and were coined CRISPR, or clustered regularly interspaced short palindromic repeats. While they shared the base pair repeats, the spacers in-between were variable. Another important finding was Cas, or CRISPR associated genes, which are a group of genes that are always located near CRISPRs.

In 2005, it was discovered that the CRISPR genes of prokaryotes contributed to their immunity towards viruses because the CRISPR spacers matched the viral DNA. It was hypothesized that after a bacterium survived viral infection, it added a part of the virus's genetic code into its genome as a type of memory for the next infection. It was later proven that the RNA transcription of CRISPR (crRNA) binds to Cas proteins in a complex that can target foreign DNA and cleave, or cut it. Therefore the identical spacers as well as the Cas proteins are important in viral immunity for prokaryotes.

In 2011, Emmanuelle Charpentier and her colleagues discovered an RNA species near the CRISPR locus named tracrRNA, which has complementary base pairing to the repeated regions of CRISPR. After further experiments, Charpentier found that the Cas9 protein and

tracrRNA are vital for the processing and maturation of crRNA, forming a complex which leads to the cleavage of viral DNA.

In a collaboration with Jennifer A. Doudna in 2012, the two scientists discovered that tracrRNA not only triggers the processing of crRNA, but activates the crRNA guided DNA cleavage with Cas9. Charpentier and Doudna also performed a very important experiment in which they fused the RNA components into an active, single guide RNA molecule (sgRNA). Furthermore, they demonstrated that the sgRNA could be modified to target specific DNA sequences and result in the cleavage of particular sections of a DNA molecule.

In summation, Charpentier and Doudna created a two-component system, involving sgRNA and Cas9, which can be configured to cleave DNA sequences and could be used for programmable genome editing. This technology allows researchers a multitude of possibilities, one of which is to isolate mutations associated with diseases and test it for treatment. Currently, this technology is being used to develop a treatment for sickle cell disease, a disease in which a defective form of hemoglobin is produced and red blood cells sickle, unable to properly transport oxygen.

In treatment of sickle cell disease, scientists extract cells from the patient's bone marrow, and use CRISPR-Cas9 to edit a gene to code for the production of fetal hemoglobin, which as of now has proven to compensate for the sickled red blood cells in the patient's body.

While CRISPR technology can be used for good, it also has the potential for use in ethically questionable situations. As an example, a Chinese scientist used CRISPR-Cas9 technology to genetically modify embryos in order to protect them from developing HIV. As it turns out, this scientist may not have followed strict ethical guidelines or regulations. Doudna herself denounced this scientist's use of the technology she helped discover, and said that gene-editing of human embryos should only be used when there is no viable alternative approach.

While there may have to be regulations in place for the CRISPR-Cas9 technology, it has great potential to treat so many patients worldwide. Virtually all genetic diseases have a possibility of treatment with this amazing discovery as it provides the ability to edit any genome. I hope that this year's Nobel Prize in chemistry winners not only inspire the health of millions, but inspire other women to know that they can accomplish great things in the world of science.

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## If Not Science Then What?

**By Sarah Brill, Science and Technology Editor**



I learned about climate change in depth about four years ago in a Global Change Biology class at Bard College. In that class, we learned about the implications of the human footprint on the environment and the direction in which our planet is heading if we do not make a change. We learned about the effects climate change

has not only on the temperature of the planet, but also how it affects wildlife and migratory patterns. If these patterns are skewed in any way, or if wildlife is severely affected, our own life will also be affected. Since that point, I have made changes in my life to reduce my carbon footprint, such as using reusable straws, cutting out meat, and focusing on recycling and reducing my carbon footprint. I have also made it my mission to try as best as I can to educate people on the importance of combating climate change and to understand it as a scientific problem not as a political one.

One of the rebuttals I have heard in response to climate change is that climate has fluctuated over the years; what makes this different? It is a good question. Even now, the climate is constantly fluctuating. There are points of high and low temperature fluxes, but as we learned in basic math, with exponential graphs, there is a slope, and with this climate graph, the slope is increasing at an exponential rate. While there might be dips of low temperatures, the trend of the graph is uphill. In 2015, a paper was published stating that "the rate of global warming during the last 15 years has been as fast as or faster than that seen during the latter half of the 20th century. The study refutes the notion that there has been a slowdown or 'hiatus' in the rate of global warming in recent years." This published work



takes aim at tackling the misconception that climate change has somehow plateaued for a period of time. The fact of the matter is that climate change has fluctuated over the years, but with continual and exponential growth.

Another doubt about climate change I have heard is that temperatures have been colder in certain regions, so how is that climate change? Climate change is mainly based on the irregularity of temperature and weather, not just the increase in atmospheric temperature. It can be either an unnatural minimum or maximum temperature. For example, if a region has an average high temperature of 90 degrees fahrenheit with an average low temperature of 60 degree fahrenheit one summer, then if temperatures exceed that limit in both directions, that would be considered irregular climate.

The same applies for weather conditions. Certain regions are accustomed to a certain amount of hurricanes or snowstorms in a year. If that region gets less than that normal amount or more than that normal amount, that is considered a factor of climate change. For example, anyone who was in New York City for winter last year remembers that we got one slushy snow fall and nothing else for the entire winter. This is incredibly abnormal, even for New York City as it goes against the normal weather patterns of New York's north east position. Another example

is the Michigan area, an area that we all know gets flooded with snow regardless of whether it had a year of snow which was not normal for that region. Climate change is dependent on what the region is expected to have temperature and whether wise, and what they receive instead.

In October of 2020 alone, all of the regions of the United States had either a higher than average temperature or a lower than average temperature which is indicative of climate change. Needless to say, science has backed up climate change. For some reason an issue which should have been dealt with as a scientific issue is being dealt with as a political one. There is constant debate on what laws should be passed to combat climate change — whether that be joining the Paris Agreement or moving towards wind and solar energy. There should never be a debate. Our world is on fire. Our house is on fire, and if that fire is not put out immediately, everything on this planet could cease to exist! Treat this crisis as a crisis. It is not a debate.

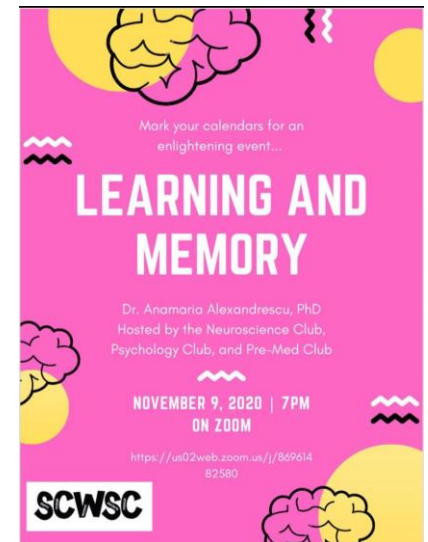
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## Learning and Memory: Research in Synaptic Plasticity Event

By Amanda Shalumov



“Can you imagine a color you've never seen before?” Dr. Anamaria Alexandrescu, Ph.D., asked this question as an introduction to her research in the field of neuroscience to the viewers on Zoom at an event hosted by the YU Neuroscience, Psychology, and Pre-Med club. She spent the last few years studying synaptic plasticity in *Aplysia californica*, commonly known as a sea slug, and now she teaches at multiple universities including Columbia and NYU, sharing her discoveries with young, innovative scholars. When the audience responded that they cannot think of a new color, Dr. Alexandrescu went on to make the point that *our brains are made up of memories*. Although it may seem like a bold claim to make, as she went on to explain how humans rely on memories for our behaviors, it became increasingly apparent that our

memories play a huge role in our everyday lives — perhaps a larger role than most of us initially anticipated.

To prove this, she asked us another question. “If I tell you to imagine an apple, how did you know what to think of?” The answer may seem obvious — because we have seen apples before. This demonstrates that everything we currently know is a result of our memories being exposed to it. We have seen an apple for the first time at some point in our lives, and solidified the information in our memories so that when an apple is referenced in the future, we can recall the information we learned. Through our five senses we perceive stimuli, using our memories to solidify the information so we may apply it daily to situations that correspond. This shows the significance of researching different areas of the brain, including the hippocampus, which is related to memory formation.

Dr. Anamaria Alexandrescu went on to introduce her mentors. She started with her “scientific grandfather” as she calls him, Eric Kandel. He brilliantly used *Aplysia californica* to study the molecular mechanisms of memory formation. He won the 2,000 Nobel Prize and was the postdoc of Thomas Carew, who was Dr. Alexandrescu’s mentor or “scientific father,” as she says. With the help of her mentors and their previous work, Dr. Anamaria made notable discoveries, including

studying the growth factor that induces changes in the postsynaptic neuron when *Aplysia* forms memories. It’s important to consider that in the first 20-30 years of research with *Aplysia*, it was thought that all the changes occur in the presynaptic neuron. However, as more discoveries are being made, the postsynaptic neurons prove to be significant. This indicates the rapid advancements in the field that are being made through generations of neuroscientists. Dr. Alexandrescu additionally researched growth factors — specifically how they contribute to the neurons forming synapses in development. She studied neurons growing and forming connections for the first time and there was a great parallel in memory formation and neuron development that she observed. She went on to publish two papers as part of her Ph.D. about her research.

After gaining incredible insight into the process of research in neuroscience, as well as the history behind what we know today, Dr. Anamaria Alexandrescu provided further information to the young minds at YU, answering any general questions at the end of the session. She explained the career possibilities in neuroscience, including what one can do with a Ph.D. in the field. She mentioned that neuroscience has many subcategories that one can go into, including computational neuroscience and consulting. She also suggested participating

in research at labs, and encouraged us to try and be part of a study that we can truly immerse ourselves in intellectually.

The session wrapped up with a slide presenting her contact information, leaving the viewers with a sense of fascination for the neuroscience field, and more notably, a newfound appreciation for those who have dedicated their lives to continue the pursuit of knowledge — a bond between generations of curious minds.

## [A Bad Looking Toupee or Hairy Caterpillars?](#)

**By Sara Muharremi, Staff Writer**



As if our year hasn’t been crazy enough so far, in Eastern Virginia there have been sightings of unique hairy-looking caterpillars that are quite dangerous. For these caterpillars to appear in eastern Virginia is a little unusual as they normally appear in southern states such as Missouri and Texas. These caterpillars are called *Megalopyge opercularis*, but they are more commonly known as ‘toupee caterpillars,’ ‘puss caterpillars,’

or even as ‘southern flannel moths.’

The best way to describe how these caterpillars look is as if someone dropped a toupee on top of a caterpillar. If one of these caterpillars stood upright, they’d look like Cousin Itt from “The Addams Family”. The only difference between the two is that these caterpillars are not to be messed with; they are some of the most venomous caterpillars in America.

Although they look soft and fluffy, these caterpillars should not be petted — if you touch their hair, it will release toxins that interact with your skin resulting in a reaction similar to a rash. Hiding underneath their hair are toxic hollow spines that can easily stick in your skin. If one of these caterpillars were to sting you, using duct tape or any kind of sticky tape to remove the spines that may be stuck in your skin is crucial, then you should apply ice onto the area to minimize any kind of swelling and inflammation. After, follow it up with a trip over to a medical professional just to assure that all the hairs are removed from your skin and nothing else goes awry. Once you're stung, the pain is said to be excruciating. Some have described the pain to be a sharp stinging that could be felt throughout their body. You can also develop a fever, swollen glands or even muscle cramps.

These caterpillars can typically be found in forests or parks;

some people have even been stung because a caterpillar has fallen out of a tree. Although the likelihood that someone runs into one of these is rare, it’s a good idea to familiarize yourself with any potentially harmful creatures before going hiking just in case.

According to Mr. Eric Day from Virginia Tech’s Insect Identification Lab, these caterpillars have slightly grown in number but there is by no means an ‘outbreak.’ The reason for the higher number in the caterpillars could be because “[p]luss caterpillars may have had the opportunity to feed and grow because predators that customarily keep them in check, such as birds and wasps, may not be abundant. [...] [and] that warmer summers and winters help the caterpillars.”

This is just another reason why we should be taking a good and hard look at how we’re affecting our planet. The ecosystem is complex and intricate, and when one organism is brought out of bounds, it can affect everything else in the chain. The rise of the stinging toupee caterpillars is just one small example of that.

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## Useful Inventions

### Throughout History: The Copy and Paste Technique

By Tova Shmulewitz



Most, if not all, people would agree that some of the most basic and useful commands on a computer are the cut, copy, and paste functions. Ctrl (or cmd) X, C, and V have become essential to anyone using a word processor for work, school or even just for fun. For the very few who might not be aware of these commands, here is a helpful key:

Cut (ctrl/cmd X) removes the word/s selected, and copies them.

Copy (ctrl/cod C) copies the word/s selected, but does not remove them.

Paste (ctrl/cmd V) reinserts the word/s that were either cut or copied.

These commands may be the most used shortcuts on a keyboard, but has anyone ever considered where these practical operations came from? Who were they invented by? Why do they have these names?

The titles ‘cut’ and ‘paste’ refer to the system that was in place before there were computers or photocopiers, a time when printing presses were still being used. When certain phrases or words or objects had to be moved to a new or different place, the only way to do this would be to manually cut out the section, and paste it into its new position with glue. The antiquated terms have been given a technological meaning, as we are essentially doing the same action, but electronically.

The shortcuts were invented by a man named Larry Tesler. Tesler was a computer scientist in Silicon Valley during the very early days of computing, before computers were commonly used machines. He has been credited with inventing not only the cut, copy, and paste commands, but also the ‘find & replace’ command in word processors. He specialised in user-interfaces, spending his career trying and succeeding to make computers easier to use for the common person. Unfortunately he passed away in February 2020, but his legacy lives on through these commands that we use in our daily lives!

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## Invention of the Month: In Your Own Skin

By Zippy Spanjer, Staff Writer



[Epicel](#) is a piece of technology developed by the company Vericel. The technology consists of cultured autologous skin grafts, and was approved by the FDA for use in February 2016. Currently, it can only be implemented under the direction of a physician.

The process of Epicel growth is as follows: A 2x6 centimeter section of skin is harvested from a patient and sent to Vericel’s lab. There it is grown in culture: in an incubator, in the presence of murine fibroblasts. Murine fibroblasts are mouse stem cells that can grow into skin cells. The mouse cells are irradiated so they won’t cause infection or proliferate. After 17 days, the new skin is ready for grafting. The grafts are approximately 50 square centimeters. They consist of keratinocytes (skin cells) 2-8 layers thick that will proliferate post-transplant.

Epicel is currently used by people with deep or full-thickness burns covering an

area greater than or equal to 30% of their body.

Epicel can’t be used if the wound is infected. Infection should be fully treated before implementing Epicel. Additionally, since Epicel is grown in the presence of antibiotics, mouse cells, and bovine serum, it should not be given to patients with sensitivities to those ingredients.

Risks associated with Epicel are mostly the same as risks of recovering from any major burn wound. There is risk of massive infection, risk of later development of squamous cell carcinoma — a type of skin cancer — and risk of organ failure and death.

The biggest barriers of Epicel are safety and efficacy. As of 2018, it had only been used on 954 patients. Current data indicate a 84% survival rate, and a graft take (success) of 75%, which is better than unassisted or even allograft burn wound healing.

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## Business:

[Sea Limited \(NYSE:SE\)](#)

By Jacob Mermelstien



Sea limited is a holding company that conducts business through its subsidiaries which are: Garena, Shopee and SeaMoney. Garena's inception occurred in 2009 as a digital entertainment business focused on offering mobile and PC online games through partnerships and licensing agreements while also self-developing mobile games for the global markets. Their self-developed game free-fire has been their source of virality expanding its reach to over 130 markets. In 2014, Sea Limited launched a financial services platform, SeaMoney. As of 2019, it offers e-wallet services, payment processing, and credit related digital financial offerings. These products are branded under the names AirPay, ShopeePay, and ShopeePayLater. In 2015, it launched its ecommerce platform, Shopee. A Marketplace that adopts a mobile first approach in connecting buyers and sellers. It offers sellers integrated payment, logistics, fulfillment, and other value-added services. Shopee's user platform has a social nature, allowing users to follow, rate, and play micro-games with one another. Its marketplace offers a vast selection of products provided by third party vendors and sold directly to buyers. All three businesses operate together like a feedback loop,

each helping the others business. Garena provides Shopee with the games necessary to attract more customer engagement. SeaMoney provides the digital financial services offered on Shopee. Shopee increases customer usage to both other companies' services thereby successfully scaling all three businesses. The integration is brilliant and has increased scalability and revenue of each business.

### **Garena — Digital Entertainment**

Garena is a digital entertainment business focused on developing and publishing games in-house. It is also expanding its offering to its users through licensing third party games. Within its games, it has entrenched longer engagement through entertainment content, such as livestreaming of online gameplay, as well as social features, like user chat and online forums. The business is a leading catalyst in Esports hosting events, competitions, and professional teams that garner the interest of thousands of spectators. Its business has a global presence with users from Southeast Asia, Taiwan and Latin America.

#### **Game offerings:**

Garena supplies its gamers with multiple genres of gaming modes. Here are some categories of Garena games: MOBA — a multiplayer online battle arenas are games like battle royal, RPG — an action role-playing are games like call of duty, MMORPG — a

massively multiplayer online role-playing games like GKART, a racing game. Garena has catered to the increasingly popular mobile gaming market with its wide selection of popular games. Most importantly its partnership with Tencent has provided additional selections for its gaming community. To name a few: League of Legends, Arena of Valor, and Speed Drifters are owned by Tencent Holdings Limited. Garena has obtained the right of first refusal to games it selects from Tencent.

#### **Free-fire**

The one game that provides a majority of revenue for Garena is its home-made game Free-fire. It has 100 million active daily users. The most downloaded mobile game globally for the full year of 2019 across the Google Play and iOS App Stores combined, according to App Annie. Most recently in Q2 2020 management announced a doubling in paying users for the month of July. The app is remaining popular and conversion rates to paid users are increasing.

#### **Garena's Audience:**

“QAU's” quarterly active users was 500 million with a CAGR of 61% Y/Y. “QPU's” quarterly paying users were 50 million with a CAGR of 91% Y/Y. A 2019 research report from Newzoo and Niko Partners stated that it was number one in market share in southeast Asia by revenue in the combined PC and mobile game market in 2019 (Seen in 10-k).

### **Monetization: How does Garena make money?**

All downloads of its games begin with the “freemium” model that allows users to download and play fully functional games for free. Revenue is gained by selling game players in-game items such as clothing, weaponry or equipment and season passes for their characters. The incentive for in game items is progress, better social interaction and more personalized experience.

### **Shopee – Ecommerce**

Shopee is a mobile centric ecommerce platform that cleverly integrates social media, gaming, logistical infrastructure, and comprehensive buyer/seller services. Shopee’s hosts mainly small to midsize businesses in addition to its own products purchased from third parties to fill demand. Shopee provides its services to Indonesia, Taiwan, Vietnam, Thailand, Philippines, Malaysia, Singapore, and Brazil. Its buyers mainly purchase from sellers within their market. However, buyers can purchase from different markets in other countries. Its strategy has been fruitful in growing GMV (gross merchandise volume) and monetizing its customer base.

### **Trust**

Shopee maintains its **brand name** through cultivating trustworthy relationships with its buyers and sellers.

### **Buyer protection:**

**Seller verification** — Sellers undergo a verification process and agree to terms and conditions.

**Listing screen**— Listings are screened for illegal goods and sellers deemed risky are not visible on the platform until manually cleared by compliance. Violations result in permanent removal from the platform.

**Shopee guarantee** — Payments made by buyers are held from the seller until the product is confirmed to have been received.

**Dispute resolution** — Support teams help buyers with disputes and any compensation they seek from a seller.

### **Seller Support:**

Shopee Platform provides operational, technological, logistical and payment solutions in addition to a support team with local knowledge of their market.

Value added services, “Service by Shopee” – offers inventory and revenue management, online store setup, delivery and payment collection, and fulfillment.

### **Social + Gamification = Network effects**

Shopee uses social media and in-app mini-games to increase user engagement and expand network effects. This strategy is broken down into four segments:

**“Shopee Games”** — In app mini-games that encourage interactions between users by rewarding Shopee coins. Recruiting friends proves most rewarding monetarily for players within games.

**“Shopee Coins”** — Users win coins and purchase items at a discount when participating in mini-games and campaign activities promoting the Shopee platform.

**“Shopee Live”** — Real time engagement for sellers to interact with buyers on a livestream and promote sales and brand awareness.

**“Shopee Feed”** — Multi-media feature providing buyers with a scroll down feed. Features include likes, comments, trending products, “followed” sellers’ products, and previous browsing categories.

These four strategies are critical to improving network effects. Shopee is expanding its reach by creating a reliable ecosystem and one stop shop for sellers and buyers. Buyers recruiting friends provides sellers with a larger audience and more sales. The value of a game increases for buyers playing it when there are more participants since increases in competition garners larger rewards for winners. Network effects are most important on Buyers “social media” where they can scroll through their feed, interact with friends and sellers, and buy products at a discount for playing games. Sellers will flock to the platform that has

the best audience and user engagement. Overall, network effects are critical for all participants of Shopee's platform since more participants increases value for all.

### **Monetization — How does Shopee make money?**

**Advertising services** — Paid by sellers promoting their product.

#### **Transaction based-fees**

— Each transaction allocates revenue to Shopee as a fee for its platform service.

#### **Value-added services** —

Inventory management, online store operations, and fulfillment services.

#### **“Service by Shopee”** —

Shopee's store purchases products from third-party sellers to reselling on its own store called “Service by Shopee”.

#### **SeaMoney — Digital Financial Services (DFS)**

SeaMoney is a digital financial service that completes the feedback loop of Sea Limited's businesses. Its three services are e-wallet services, payment processing, credit related. These services are found under the names AirPay, ShopeePay and ShopeePayLater. Sea limited's revenue is impacted the least by SeaMoney. The company is in an early developmental stage trying to break away from its original purpose as only an integration for Shopee and join its competitive industry on a global level. Currently a majority of SeaMoney revenue is from servicing Shopee's customer transactions. Its operations have reduced

payment friction and operational efficiency. Striving for a larger market to service it has been able to expand its customer list beyond Shopee and into several industries in southeast Asia. Those include telecommunications companies, entertainment service providers, movie theaters, amusement parks, utility service providers, food delivery service providers, credit card issuers, banks, insurance companies, and car leasing companies. Its wide range of customers is a testament to its applicability to an increasing number of industries and was ranked the leading financial services provider in southeast Asia. As of its recent annual filing, It has obtained licensing to Vietnam, Thailand, Indonesia, the Philippines and Malaysia, and to provide loans in Thailand and Indonesia.

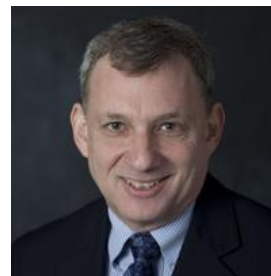
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### **Interview with Dr. Moses Pava**

**By Aliza Leichter on behalf of the *YU Observer***



Dr. Moses Pava is the former Dean of the Sy Syms School of Business, the Alvin Einbender University Professor of Business Ethics, and Professor of Accounting. He has been teaching at Yeshiva University since 1998, and has lectured and written numerous books on the topics of Jewish business ethics, spirituality in business, and corporate accountability. I had the honor and opportunity to interview Dr. Pava about his past experience, the latest initiatives at YU, and advice for current students.

### ***YU Observer*: What was your background before you came to YU, and what led you to YU?**

**Dr. Moses Pava:** I've been at YU for 32 years, since 1988. In 1983, I was attending RIETS to become a pulpit rabbi, but at that point decided to go to business school. That same year, I started studying at NYU Stern School of Business' MBA program. I discovered that I had more in common with fellow professors than students and switched to the PhD program. In 1987, I taught for the year at Hunter College, and came to YU when Dr. Michael Schiff, former head of NYU Stern's accounting department, became founding dean of Sy Syms School of Business; I was living in Washington Heights and still

attending NYU. I am at YU because of its mission to bring [T]orah knowledge and secular knowledge to students, something that is both close to my heart and something I grew up with. As soon as I started teaching at YU, I knew that this was the place I wanted to spend my career. I love teaching the students and I love the quality of the students.

**O: What led you to become so interested in business ethics and corporate responsibility?**

**P:** It happened by accident, actually. The second dean of Sy Syms, Harold Nierenberg, taught a course called Ethical and Legal Environment of Business, and last minute, asked if I was interested in teaching it. I had some interest in the topic, so I jumped at the opportunity and taught it to the students on the Beren Campus. I became more and more interested in the topic, and started doing a lot of research on it. I co-wrote “Corporate Responsibility and Financial Performance; Paradox of the Social Cost with Joshua Krausz;” it won a Choice Magazine Top Business Books of 1996 award. Krausz and I were the first professors to document a positive association with corporate social performance and traditional financial performance. It was controversial and a big deal at the time, even though today this is taken as common knowledge. I taught students from my 1997 book, “Business Ethics: A Jewish Perspective, Leading With Meaning, The Jewish Ethics Workbook,” and

continued teaching the course using that book.

**O: Can you tell us what we could expect and learn as students when reading your books, “Jewish Ethics In A Post-Madoff World,” “Business Ethics: A Jewish Perspective, Leading With Meaning, The Jewish Ethics Workbook,” “The Search for Meaning In Organizations,” and “Jewish Ethics As Dialogue,” and what made you decide you wanted to become an author?**

**P:** In order to become a professor and gain tenure, you have to do research. I was conducting research as part of the job, and what made me want to combine Jewish ethics with business ethics was that I was teaching at YU; I wanted to write books for the students. I co-edited “Jewish Business Ethics” with a mentor of mine, Rabbi Dr. Aaron Levine A”H, who was teaching at Yeshiva College (YC), and was also interested in the topic of Jewish Business Ethics.

**O: As Chair of the Accounting Department, what are some initiatives that you have helped create?**

**P:** I work closely with partners at several accounting firms, some of whom were former students, in order to make sure our curriculum remains state of the art. We meet bimonthly to discuss different issues in the accounting field to ensure that we are meeting the needs of our accounting students. Recently, we developed a new course called the Future of Corporate

Accountability. In addition to working with and advising students, the most important job is hiring faculty to teach the courses, as well as scheduling courses, and meeting with the graduates and alumni who constitute the committee. I designed a masters program in accounting, which has grown tremendously, and accounting remains one of the biggest majors on campus.

**O: What led you to design the new Sy Syms Jewish Values curriculum?**

**P:** Nine years ago as Dean of Sy Syms, I felt that YC requirements did not meet the needs of students, and wanted to emphasize Jewish values and the application of Jewish values for business students.

**O: What advice can you give to students who are entering the workforce during COVID?**

Be flexible. The most important thing to learn as an undergraduate is to learn how to learn; the knowledge we’re teaching you has a relatively short shelf-life. You are going to have to become a self-learner and be much more flexible than in previous years. You need to be the entrepreneur of your own career, which means staying current, and staying motivated. There are huge opportunities in accounting, especially in the growing area of sustainability in accounting.

**O: What led you to create the honors program?**

**P:** When I became Dean, YC had a very large honors



program, and it was better for the university to have honors programs in all three undergraduate schools; otherwise, it seemed unfair. There was a high demand for the honors program among students who were extremely bright, had high SAT scores, and wanted to study at YU on a scholarship, but needed to go to either YC or Stern. I became Director of the Honors Program, which gave students much more flexibility in choosing to study either business or liberal arts, and raised the level across the board.

## Place Your Bet on Sports Betting

By Judah Esses



When the pandemic hit and live sports were halted, much hope seemed lost for the online sports betting market. However, since the restart of sports, the recovery of stocks such as DraftKings and Penn National have been remarkable. Since hitting their lows of \$10.04 and \$3.25 in March, DraftKings has surged over 415%, while Penn National Gaming has grown close to 200%. This rise can be attributed mainly to the demand for sports betting, especially as all sports returned simultaneously. Because of the influx of sports throughout the

summer, States saw record numbers of bets being placed. Pennsylvania saw a record-high [\\$365 million](#) bets placed, and online wagering accounted for 88.1% of the \$365 million. In August, New Jersey set a nationwide [record of \\$668 million bets](#). Much of the optimism in the market can be attributed to legalized sports betting, which could potentially increase the online sports betting market by tens of billions of dollars. However, because of the growing fear of a second wave of the coronavirus, which could shut down sports again, the market has seen a steep decline over the past month. Nonetheless, the long-term future for the online sports betting market seems bright.

In January, Penn National [acquired](#) a 50% stake in media giant Barstool Sports founded by the internet sensation CEO Dave Portnoy. Barstool Sports has the following of millions of teens and college students, appealing to a new wave of sports bettors. The favorability of sports betting among this age group has been a driving reason for the confidence surrounding the legalization of sports betting around the country. Just last month, they released the Barstool Sportsbook, which was highly advertised to the millions of followers on the Barstool Sports media pages. On the first weekend being live, the app was downloaded 66,000 times, breaking the download records of any other sportsbook app. This was especially impressive given the fact that it was only

released in the state of Pennsylvania. Jay Snowden, CEO of Penn National, [plans](#) to release its app in every state where sports betting is legal by 2021. With the strong following of millions and an outspoken Dave Portnoy backing it up, Penn Gaming has a chance to secure a considerable market share in the online sports betting market.

DraftKings has also been making major strides. In early September, DraftKings announced that Michael Jordan has signed on to be an investor and advisor. This has given a lot of confidence to investors who were skeptical of DraftKings stock and the online sports betting market. DraftKings holds a 38% share of the online sports betting market, second to FanDuel, which holds a 43% market share. Securing such a significant market share has given DraftKings a gaining first movers advantage, which could be even more valuable with the start of legalized sportsbooks. One thing to notice, though, is DraftKings has exerted a lot of capital and has had [multiple offerings](#) in the past few months. However, DraftKings is a safe long-term bet as the market starts to grow.

The most significant growth factor for the sports betting market is national legalization. Since the repeal of the Professional and Amateur Sports Protection Act (PASPA), the failed federal ban on sports betting, [25 states](#) have passed legislation to embrace sports

betting. Of these 25 states, 11 have fully legalized online sports betting. As more and more states buy into the idea of legalized gambling, there is the potential of gaining millions of new users and bringing hundreds of millions of dollars of revenue for companies such as DraftKings and Penn National. Just this [election day](#), Maryland, Louisiana and South Dakota voted to legalize sports betting. Now more than half the country has begun legalizing sports betting, and states such as New York, Michigan, and Texas might soon be next. Because of the coronavirus, states are looking to mitigate their losses, and sports betting has become an [attractive option](#) to do so. States that have legalized sports betting have seen large revenue increases from the holds and taxes placed on sportsbooks. This extra revenue has proved useful as the economic effects of COVID-19 still linger and states are in need of financial help. Having this extra revenue can likely speed up legislation and pave the way for many new states to legalize sportsbooks fully. The rise in the legalization of sports betting, specifically sportsbooks, will be huge for Penn National and DraftKings because not only will they see a massive increase in users, but they will also see a gain in confidence from investors, which is something they have previously been lacking.

Although the road to success for Penn National and DraftKings

may look bumpy, there is a lot of room for growth looking forward. Coronavirus has made investors concerned, but has also helped propel the growth of the online sports betting market. With many people cooped up in their homes looking for excitement, sports betting has become an outlet for millions of people. With betting numbers setting records, the number of legislations and legalizations being passed rising, and both companies bringing on world-renown talents such as Dave Portnoy and Michael Jordan, there is a bright future ahead for the online sports betting market.

## How Has COVID-19 Changed the Digital Marketing Game?

By Beatrice O'Campo



Recently, my boss signed me up for HubSpot's INBOUND Marketing Conference. In normal times, that would have meant staying in a hotel and spending two days in a convention center networking, visiting vendor booths, and attending seminars and Q&A sessions. During the COVID-19 pandemic, marketing and

business conferences have made the jump to virtual.

For those pursuing careers in digital marketing (a field which spans from deciphering the mystical algorithm of Google Ads to making TikToks), the virtual and online worlds are already our stomping grounds. And guess what? COVID-19 has opened a lot of new opportunities and marketing techniques for us to use.

What does that mean? Three words: Risk takers rejoice. We're seeing that ideas a boss might have called crazy last year are now on the table. With metrics flying all over the place and most people bored in quarantine, it is time for marketers to step out of our comfort zones.

Digital marketers used to be scared to death of sending out emails with exaggerated words (for example, "it's heeere!!!" instead of "it's here"), capitalized words or emojis in the subject line. Contrary to popular belief, these things won't get your email relegated to the dark corners of the dreaded spam folder. Instead, they are likely to boost open rates as people search for new, exciting content to fill their lives. So, stop relying so much on your strong subject lines and rejecting gimmicks. It's time to stand out.

Meanwhile, putting the word "new" in subject lines can boost open rates by 17%. People are pretty disgusted with the current time period. They want to flip the calendar forward. They

want to move on from the past. When it comes to consuming, that translates to wanting the newest products. And, because it has been a hard year, consumers feel deserving to treat themselves. (Case in point: Me. Please don't ask how many things I've bought on Amazon since this pandemic started.)

Another cardinal rule of marketing and advertising that is being broken: talking about the negatives. If you've ever seen the TV show "Mad Men", you probably remember Don Draper harping on this. Talking about negatives in your ads will make the customer have negative associations of your product, right? Well, not when it comes to COVID-19. Based on open, click and like rates, it seems that people want to see marketers mention the pandemic. This is especially true in Business to Business (B2B) marketing — I work for an energy management software company where 100% of our marketing is B2B. We can drive a strong response by not sugar coating the current situation and instead speaking about the effects of COVID-19. This is likely because our B2B buyers are turning around and helping their customers, and they need to be informed about what is happening right now to do so.

However, if you are working in Business to Customer (B2C) marketing, it is best to make your mentions of COVID-19 more subtle and focus on appealing to pathos in your messages. People who have spent the past seven months seeing their co-workers' houses,

pets and kids in Zoom meetings are now expecting a more personal touch when it comes to digital marketing. They want to feel as if they know the company and the people behind the ads. As a result, marketing is becoming more and more of a PR game as marketers focus on crafting genuine, customer focused messages. This includes live streaming, webinars, and catchy DIY videos — anything human, approachable, and entertaining.

Not only should we let our customers get to know us, we should get to know our customers. People have a need to connect and communicate now more than ever. Everyone wants to be heard and understood right now, whether it's by our friends and family or by the guy at Golan Heights making our favorite schnitzel wrap. In the marketing world, social media polls are a great way to connect with customers. They require a lot less commitment than leaving a comment and they ask customers what they want to see. This makes the client feel heard and understood.

These may be tricky times, but if you're going into marketing, they're also pretty exciting. I know that a lot of us that study marketing are doing so because we love the creativity that goes into it. Now, we have a chance to really let our creativity shine (and see some cool results). So, go out, create and have fun. (Just don't expect the Google Ads algorithm to get any easier. Some things never change.)

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HubSpot. 2020, September 22-23. INBOUND Marketing Conference, Virtual.

## [The 2020 Election's Effect on The Stock Market](#)

**By Batia Segal**



During the week of the election, [CNN Business](#) reported that the market is on track for their best week since April. In alignment with CNN's prediction, the market hit an all-time high this past week. According to [Google Finance](#), the S&P 500 rose around 1.37%. For background, generally, the market drops in price as national uncertainty rises because investors become fearful that they will lose out on their investments so they sell their stocks. On the other hand, when there is certainty, the market price rises because investors do not want to miss out on a good buy. With the uncertainty of this year's election, it is surprising that the markets hit another all-time high. On the surface, it seems that the election results are uncertain due to voting delays and lawsuits. However, by

taking a deeper look into the election results, it becomes apparent that the upsurge in market price makes sense.

### **What the Election Results Mean for Investors:**

As mentioned previously, many expected turbulence in the market during election week. Because the predicted blue wave did not occur, the split congress offers security to investors. According to the New York Times, the Democratic Party has a majority in the [House of Representatives](#) and the Republican Party has a majority in the [Senate](#). Due to the split congress, policies affecting an investor's portfolio such as stricter business regulations and higher capital gains taxes are not likely to pass. In other words, for the next two years, current business regulations and tax laws are likely to withstand. By the same token, in order for a law to be passed, it must be approved by the House, voted upon by the Senate and either signed on by the President or — if vetoed — voted in at two-thirds majority by the Senate. With this in mind, it is important to note that any proposed law needs bipartisanship to pass. This provides an extra layer of certainty to investors because laws are not likely to drastically change.

### **Historical Market Performance Under Our Current Political Scenario:**

Historically, market returns are highest when congress is split between the two parties.

Although the market does not always follow historical trends, it is the closest source there is for predicting the future. According to [CNBC](#), the highest returns occur with a Democratic president in office along with a split congress offering an average return on investment of 13.6% — with a Republican president in office and congress coming in second with an average yearly return of 12.9%. Correspondingly, our current political scenario includes a Republican president and Congress with a likely future political scenario of a Democratic president and split Congress. As previously mentioned, both our current and forthcoming scenarios return the highest average yearly rate on investment historically. In congruence with the historical market performance under our present political structure, investors are confident in putting their money into the market despite a seemingly uncertain presidential election.

### **Is Investing in The Stock Market the Wise Thing to Do At the Moment?**

Generally, in order to grow wealth, a person needs to invest their money long term. Because of the hindsight benefits of buying low, many people wait for the market prices to drop before buying. This becomes an issue because while waiting they miss out on good deals. For the average person it is difficult to predict exactly where the market is heading — which is clearly presented by the election's influence on the

market. Therefore it is important for the average person to invest their money into an index fund such as the S&P 500 to incur long term wealth. In other words, the market does not solely depend on the person sitting in the executive branch, it depends on the investors' certainty.

### [How the Election Affects the Stock Market](#)

**By Eli Itzhaky**



Just like the presidential election, the stock market is full of surprises. In a week known for its historical volatility due to election uncertainty, with the addition of being in the midst of an ongoing pandemic, the market seemingly ignored all of this and had its best gains since April. Investors have spent months preparing different scenarios but no one could predict the crazy run that the market has been on for the past week, beginning the day after the election. With the questionable handling of the pandemic, or lack thereof, Donald Trump's odds of reelection were slowly vanishing while Joe Biden was picking up steam amongst every major poll. Wall Street was betting on a "Blue Sweep", meaning the Democrat party

wins the presidency and picks up more seats in the senate, but the latter is looking less likely as votes are being counted.

Even with most investors' predictions being wrong, the market has still found something to be happy about. Since Republicans are the majority in the senate, they would likely block any tax raises that Biden might try to implement. It was reported before the election that Biden's tax plan would force those making over \$400k salary a year and living in big cities to pay over 60% in taxes. With that risk likely gone, investors generally feel a lot safer financially going forward. Although most investors would agree that Donald Trump has been great for the market, boosting the [DOW](#) and [NASDAQ](#) to record highs, they'd be happy that with a Republican majority senate, they'll be able to keep more of their gains.

During an already hectic week, there were other events as well that had impacts on the market. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said that another stimulus COVID-19 aid package will be passed very soon implying more money for consumers to spend and investors to invest. Almost parallel to the market, Bitcoin also surged last week to more than \$15,000 a coin. Combine this with the fact that the Biden team announced on Monday that Pfizer's vaccine is at 90% effective rate, bringing it one

step closer to FDA approval. This had a very positive impact on the retail, travel, and vaccine industries. For example, stocks like Boeing, AMC and Inovio had large gains while "stay at home" stocks like Zoom, Peloton and Netflix took a plunge. In the past week, the Dow gained 6.2%, S&P 500 3.62% and NASDAQ went as high as 4% but has been dealing with recent selloffs, (making the index gain about 1% in the past week.)

You can learn more about stocks and engage in discussion by being a part of the Yeshiva University Stock exchange (YUSE). It is an efficient way to stay up to date with market movement, chat with fellow students about trading, and grow your knowledge as an investor. Participants range anywhere between beginners and avid stock traders. The YUSE educates its members daily by sending helpful articles and learning tips into our group chat, enabling them to better understand how different events, like the election, COVID-19, and other worldly affairs have their effects on the stock market.

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<https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-stock-futures-drop-as-election-week-rally-pauses-11604659702>

## SSSB Club Profile: YU Sneaker Club

By Nathan Hakakian on behalf of the *YU Observer*



*Each month, the YU Observer aims to highlight one SSSB club available to the YU undergraduate community. For the November issue, the YU Observer is highlighting "YU Sneaker Club."*

**Club Name:** YU Sneaker Club

**Heads:** Joey Kalish

**Relevant Campus(es):** Wilf

**What is your club's mission statement?** Create a community of students interested in sneakers and educate them about different career opportunities within the industry.

**Why is this club important?** A passion for sneakers is not something you can tell from a person just from looking at them. This club gives students an outlet to share their love for sneakers with others, while at the same time learning and hearing from experts in the field. Hearing from different speakers will expose students to many different aspects of the sneaker industry and will allow them to be more educated about the field.

**What was your pull to get involved in/start the club?** I spoke with many people who

loved sneakers and the sneaker industry but thought there were not many like minded people. Also, SJ Tannenbaum, president of the YU Menswear Club, helped me and guided me on how to run a successful club. SJ does an amazing job at running his club and I am thankful that he took the time to help me.

**What are some things your club has done in the past?** For our first event of the semester, Brendan Dunne came to speak to us. Brendan is the GM of Complex Networks and hosts the Full-Size Run talk show and the Complex Sneakers Podcast. More importantly, he is a huge sneakerhead with over 500 pairs in his collection. He spoke about his background and his career. The highlight of the event was that for the last 40 minutes, everyone was able to ask Brendan their questions.

**What are some plans you have for this semester/future semesters?** Before school closed, I was planning on running an event with the Footlocker on 181st street. They loved the idea of having an event with our club. I hope that if everyone is back on campus soon, we will be able to run this event. For this semester, I am currently working on bringing in more speakers to talk to us. I also make it clear to my members that if they have any ideas for a potential event, they should not hesitate to reach out to me.

**With COVID, how is your club adjusting?** Covid has impacted every club, not just the YU Sneaker Club. The ability to have in-person events is something that all clubs miss.

However, I chose to take advantage of the situation. With the power of Zoom, I can get speakers who either do not live in New York or would not be able to commute to [Washington Heights] for an event.

**What is your advice to someone looking to get involved on campus?** If you are looking to start a club, talk to people around campus and gauge interest in the potential club. [It is] [m]ore than likely you will find that many students share your interest. When I was asking around about the sneaker club, many students said they were surprised that one did not exist already.

**Anything else to say about your club:** Next semester, I will hopefully have a presence on Beren. I understand that there are probably many women who share my passion for sneakers, so I believe it is a good idea to have one. My goal for the YU Sneaker Club is that eventually, instead of students joining the club because they love sneakers, students will become interested in sneakers because of this club.

*Are you a YU undergraduate club head interested in seeing your club featured in a future edition? Email us at [theyuobserver@gmail.com](mailto:theyuobserver@gmail.com) with your club name and the names of the club heads!*

## Arts & Culture:

## YU Observer November Poetry Submissions: Transition

**By Anonymous and Amit Tobolsky**

*Each month, the YU Observer sends a call to YU students for poetry submissions following a specific theme. This month, the theme was "Transition", and we are featuring Jacob Jablonka's piece, "Birdsong in Watercolor". However, the poems below are other submissions of honorable mention.*

**Transition  
By Anonymous**

The day I became an alien was  
the day I lost my friends  
The day I decided to board that  
spaceship and fly away to a  
place that was far away  
far better than here  
A place that was calling my  
name.  
It was that day that I stopped  
ignoring who I am.  
The day I decided to accept that  
I'm different.  
The day I decided that friends  
are supposed to make you feel  
good about yourself  
And not like an alien.  
Support you no matter what.  
Invite you places.  
Smile at you.  
Notice you.  
Notice when you're in pain.  
Not be the ones to cause it.  
The day I decided that  
impressing was just depressing  
me

The day I decided that coffee  
sipping and gossiping wasn't  
for me  
And only sips the life out of  
you.  
The day I decided that chasing  
boys only leaves you tired and  
out of breath  
While chasing girls that are  
chasing boys leaves you even  
worse off  
Face flat on the floor  
The day I decided that alcohol  
will only create a hole  
Penetrate your soul  
And will never quench your  
thirst for meaning  
I know better than that.

So I'm an alien now  
I've always noticed myself  
hovering above them  
But I chose to ignore it.  
Maybe I'm the crazy one I  
thought.  
Just be normal.  
Come back down to the ground  
Down to earth  
Low enough to get stepped on  
Every day I went to school and  
tried to fit in  
But people noticed I was  
different and they didn't like it  
They were scared of me  
They'd look at me  
Stare  
And all they'd see were three  
eyes on my forehead.  
Eyes that don't work the same  
as theirs do  
Eyes that don't see how they  
see

So here I am  
Alienated  
I'm used to it  
Sometimes I wave down from  
my ship

Check if anyone's looking for  
me  
But nobody waves back  
They don't see.  
I smack the glass  
Almost shattering it  
But they don't realize.  
It's because to them I'm in a  
different world  
I've learned a new language  
that they can't speak.  
No one misses me  
No one checks up on me  
Maybe they think I forgot  
English

I'll admit  
Sometimes I wish I can just  
come back.  
It will all be easier if I act like  
them and fit in with them.  
Be  
Normal.  
It will be great  
I'll cover up an eye  
Blinding myself from other  
people's troubles  
From the truth  
I'll do what they do  
But then I remind myself that  
it's not worth it  
Do I really want to leave all of  
this behind?  
This is where I belong now  
Here I feel loved  
I feel important  
Appreciated  
Respected  
I feel special  
To them I have a purpose  
I'm out of this world  
Up here I can shoot for the stars  
How can I give that up?  
If that's what it takes to be  
normal  
Then thanks  
But  
I'd rather be an alien.

Some say aliens aren't real  
But I guess that just means  
they've never met one  
Because all the aliens I know  
are more real than any people  
I've ever met.  
And I wait for the day everyone  
too will realize this  
But not to say I told you so.  
That day, I will welcome them  
with open arms and an open  
heart.  
The day they will join me.  
Because maybe  
Just maybe  
The day they become aliens  
Will be the day I'll finally get  
my friends back.

### **Memory Lane** **By Amit Tobolsky**

And the rain  
keeps falling  
As i walk through memory lane  
You're like dust  
Keep me broken  
I can't face you now and then

Breathe out,  
Let go of your mesmerizing  
past.  
But you can't dry when it still  
rains,  
Please,  
don't lure me back to memory  
lane.

*Do you want to see your writing  
published? The theme for  
December's poetry submissions  
is "Revision". Send all  
submissions to  
[theyuobserver@gmail.com](mailto:theyuobserver@gmail.com) by  
December 13.*

## Birdsong in Watercolor

By Jacob Jablonka, Layout Editor

*Each month, the YU Observer sends a call to YU students for poetry submissions following a specific theme. This month, the theme was "Transition", and we are featuring Jacob Jablonka's piece, 'Birdsong in Watercolor'. Other submissions of honorable mention have been published as well.*

In the window, there hangs a painting.

A natural pool surrounded by autumnal forest, the ground is covered in rain-slicked leaves. From the pool rises a bird of sapphires and aquamarines. Water brushstrokes cascade off its facets and down. It sings.

A lone figure—a child—sits among the leaves, clad in a small yellow poncho. Back to viewer, they listen and watch the scene unfold, arms clutching knees, framed by sturdy trees and dying leaves, alone under the canopy.

They do not know that they will never see the bird again. We know not how long the bird's song lasts.

*Do you want to see your writing published? The theme for December's poetry submissions is "Revision". Send all submissions to [theyuobserver@gmail.com](mailto:theyuobserver@gmail.com) by December 13.*

## Bowie, Mars, and Marxism

By Becca Couzens



David Bowie's 1971 song "[Life On Mars?](#)" is an iconic reference to 1970s pop culture. The song, released on the album "Hunky Dory," tells the story of a girl who encounters an argument with her parents, and makes her way to the cinema to escape her reality in favor of a fantastical one. While the true meaning of Bowie's bizarre words are hard to navigate, the lyrics transcend confusion and achieve an unspoken understanding with the listener. Along with the young girl's storyline, the song makes multiple references to politics and pop-culture of the 1960s and 1970s, giving it meaning and depth along with emotion. At first glance, the language of "Life On Mars?" is perplexing and unclear. However, when analyzed, Bowie offers an image of the loneliness and longing of an individual which parallels a nation longing for

peace, both of whom seek escape from life's turmoil.

I remember what I felt when listening to "Life On Mars?" for the first time. It was January of my sophomore year in high school, and David Bowie had just passed away. I was up late at night watching videos of him, and came across the video for "Life On Mars?". It featured Bowie, or Ziggy Stardust at the time, in his baby blue suit and eccentric makeup, singing in a completely white room. This was the first time I had ever felt a personal connection with an artist. I was experiencing what Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle describe as, "[the feeling that the author is 'a terrific friend of yours' or that your appreciation and understanding of an author is so intense it touches on the telepathic](#)" (20-21). The video was nothing extravagant, but I remember listening to the music and immediately feeling so understood, that I began to cry.

While I was uncertain of the song's meaning, I interpreted Bowie's lyrics as the pain of being misunderstood. The sorrowful idea of a girl being turned away by her parents, along with the chorus lyrics, "[Sailor's fighting in the dance hall \[...\] Take a look at the lawman beating up the wrong guy](#)" gave me a vivid image of unnecessary conflict and betrayal by those who should be gaining justice. I heard "Life On Mars?" during a very hard year for me. I think it was when my perception of the world became a little more mature, and I realized that darkness is a part



of life that is sometimes inevitable. The “real world” became a concept so scary to me at that age because I thought that I was doomed to fail. I was in that painful developmental process of self-discovery and exploration that occurs during teenage years, and I was trying to figure out who I was during these revelations. In retrospect, I see this is a stage that many go through; however, no one spoke openly about such struggles, and Bowie gave me recognition during this time in my life.

Furthermore, “Life On Mars?” goes even deeper than my initial reactions as a 15 year old. When analyzing the second verse of “Life On Mars?” in particular, the song’s Marxist ideals become apparent. This contradiction of ideology, is described by French philosopher Louis Althusser, as going against “[the system of ideas and representations that dominate the mind of man \[sic\] or a social group](#)” (qtd. in Bennet and Royle, 233). In other words, the lyrics represent a perspective not being encouraged or fed by the media at the time. In this verse, the song becomes increasingly political compared to the first. Rather than focusing on the unnamed girl’s story, different political references are sung. It seems that a Marxist stance is being taken against the ideology of the media and political issues of the time. America is personified with a “[tortured brow](#),” giving the impression that America is under immense pressure. This is a reference to America during the times of the

Vietnam War, an occurrence that many Americans opposed to since it was perceived as unnecessary violence. The lyric, “[That Mickey Mouse has grown up a cow](#),” references that there is an innocent façade among those in political power: Mickey Mouse, an innocent, loveable cartoon, has turned into a “cash cow,” since economic growth takes place during times of war. This symbolizes how the citizens against the efforts of the Vietnam war viewed the political power. Another view of anti-Patriotism is sung during “[Rule Britannia is out of bounds](#).” A stance is being taken against the British song of patriotism, “[Rule Britannia](#).” While Britain never entered the war, “Its government... was fully supportive of American containment policy in general and its intervention in Vietnam in early 1960s...” (Rogers). This lyric suggests that Britain is simply witnessing the unnecessary violence, and while they are not actively pursuing the war, they are not doing anything to stop it either. “Life On Mars?” reveals that those in political power who should be keeping the country safe and promoting peace are entering a war that causes unnecessary devastation and death.

The authenticity of those striving to make a change are put into question when Bowie sings the lyrics, “[Cause Lennon’s on sale again](#).” [John Lennon was a face for leftist views on politics and was openly anti-war](#) (*I Met The Walrus*, 0:38-0:50). “Life On Mars?” is skeptical regarding

whether his motives are genuine, or if he is just another man chasing popularity. New information regarding Lennon and issues within his personal life have since surfaced, describing his drug-use and violent behavior. Lennon even admitted to these acts and claimed, “[That is why I am always on about peace, you see. It is the most violent people who go for love and peace](#)” (qtd. in Oyler). “Life On Mars?” brings forth the possibility of a celebrity putting on a facade, and contradicting their own messages in privacy, and ultimately “selling-out” to gain the approval of the public. Bowie then sings about the common folk, who are portrayed in the lyrics, “[Now the workers have struck for fame](#),” which claims that those supporting celebrities, like Lennon, and supporting the anti-war movement, are doing so because it is simply another trend. Whether a change is pursued, depends on the bravery to take initiative; however, perhaps no one will care enough to do so. “Life On Mars?” describes the vicious cycle of change seemingly being sought after, but never achieved by the community.

Lastly, the most emphasized lyrics of the song are asked in the question: “[Is there life on Mars?](#)”. This existential question applies to the loneliness and longing of the girl in the first verse, along with the political issues that arise in the second. The lyric asks whether there is an escape from the madness of one’s own life,

and if there is, when will it be achieved? This is an issue that relates to many, but is often not spoken about explicitly; however, Bowie elongates the lyrics and makes it the focal point of the song. Bennet and Royle define literature as “[the space in which the questions of personal identity are most provocatively articulated](#)” (151). While song is defined as music rather than literature, there is certainly a sense of poetry within lyrics. According to Merriam-Webster Dictionary, poetry is defined as “[writing that formulates a concentrated imaginative awareness of experience in language chosen and arranged to create a specific emotional response through meaning, sound, and rhythm.](#)” This is what Bowie’s lyrics made me experience, while listening to “Life on Mars?”. I felt like someone finally saw me and my need for escape in a time of turmoil. Just by discovering this song, my life was changed for the better.

The meaning of "Life On Mars?" speaks of the struggles within developmental times in becoming an individual and a separate entity from a whole. One encounters the tough realization that she will not always share the same views and opinions as her parents, while a nation realizes that those in control will sometimes turn a blind eye to the civilians they are supposed to protect. Both parties seek escape from life’s struggles and need to be heard and recognized. While the escape to another planet may not be feasible, artists are here

to articulate what cannot be expressed by many. That is what I love about David Bowie. He was an outsider, and he spoke for outsiders through his music, which was an escape for the listener.

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## My Family Band's Upcoming YU Concert

### By Yosef Rosenfield and the Dorons



My family band, the Dorons, will be performing on Sunday, December 20 to facilitate my completion of Yeshiva College’s music major requirements. The band consists of me (vocals, guitar), my brother (electric bass, vocals), my dad (guitar, keyboard) and my mom (drums). The Dorons played at Schottenstein Theatre on the Wilf Campus in May 2017 when my brother was a music major at YU. However, given YU Facilities’ current on-campus event policies and COVID-19 restrictions, the band will instead livestream the December concert from our home studio in Providence, RI. YU students will receive a university email containing a Zoom link to the show as the concert date approaches. Viewers who tune in to the

performance can look forward to hearing the band's unique blend of [punk rock](#) and [new wave](#) with elements of [alternative](#) and [grunge](#).

### **Meet the band:**

#### **Norman Stuart Rosenfield:**

My dad was heavily involved in the Boston music scene during the 1980s and '90s — as a performer, manager and producer — whose associated bands included New Deal, [Curtis Gone Bad](#), The Roosters, [Kildevil Blues](#), The Jokermen and other acts. He and my mom played across the country together with their other band members and even performed regularly in Israel in 1978. My dad's 30 year old production label, [Nail Soup Records](#) (which corresponds to his initials), has continued to work with the Dorons as well as the solo musical outfits of his two sons, [Aryeh](#) and [me](#).

**Janice Kaidan:** My mom worked alongside my dad for over a decade, contributing as the lead vocalist, writer and bassist of New Deal and Curtis Gone Bad; she later sang and played percussion for The Jokermen, while also lending her songwriting talents to The Roosters. Kaidan's singing ability and profound lyrical wisdom are featured in her many timeless songs — often political in nature — such as "[The Mushroom Tree](#)" and "[The Great Divide](#)." She left the music industry and became a schoolteacher after learning of the [halachic \(Jewish legal\)](#)

[issues with singing before live audiences](#).

**Aryeh Rosenfield:** As the firstborn child of the [Kaidan/Stuart](#) songwriting duo, my brother surprised no one when he chose to major in music during undergrad at Yeshiva College. Aryeh hosted a music radio show between 2013 and 2015 on YU's student-run radio station, WYUR. He also founded the first ever YU Rock Ensemble in 2014 and played bass as a member of the ensemble while earning one "Performance: Chamber Ensemble" credit for each of their end-of-semester live performances. Although a rocker at heart, he also played bass for the YU Jazz Ensemble during his senior year. Despite having temporarily put music on the backburner in order to finish his law degree, Aryeh has become a skilled musician, analyst, and [aficionado](#) whose comprehensive musical knowledge and taste are unparalleled.

#### **Yosef Rosenfield (myself):**

After playing three concerts as the lead singer of the YU Rock Ensemble and a fourth paying tribute to the discographies of Maroon 5 and Panic! At The Disco, I began performing [my own music](#) under the same one-credit music performance course — adopting a pen name I've carried for years, [Joe Rosenbran](#). I write almost exclusively from [personal experience](#) and [spiritual struggle](#), applying an understanding of artistic

expression and music theory to hopefully create songs that are both divinely inspired and musically sophisticated. My final two YU concerts are scheduled to take place on Sunday, February 28 and Sunday, May 2.

### **What to expect:**

The last Dorons performance at YU honored the Jimi Hendrix Experience and the Rolling Stones, highlighting a particular album by each of the two legendary bands, and also included a couple of songs by the Clash. By contrast, our upcoming December 20 concert will feature live versions of my parents' older originals, in addition to unreleased songs written by Kaidan and demoed over 25 years ago by her and my dad's former bands. "[Absolutely Right](#)", for example, is the opening track off of Curtis Gone Bad's 1989 debut album, "[Jolt and Bolt](#)" — this song addresses the hidden narratives behind many widely accepted historical truths. In "Precious Pain," written circa 1991, Kaidan offers a heartfelt plea for the subject to let go of her imagined suffering — though the song also has universal meaning in its unintended criticism of [victim mentality](#). Stylistically, the arrangements reflect a mixture of [rock](#), pop and synth influences from '80s artists through contemporary music.

We hope you can all join us virtually on Sunday, December 20 at 6 p.m. EST as we pay homage to the Dorons' roots

and explore the future of our band's musical vision.

*“Just Ask Reb” gives YU students the opportunity to anonymously ask for advice about anything pertaining to the life of a YU student. Questions can range from social to academic problems or anything in between! Responses will be posted on the YU Observer Facebook page on a rolling basis. They will also be featured in an article posted to the YU Observer website and in the YU Observer's monthly PDF publications.*



**Q: I'm interested in writing for one of the student papers, but I don't know which one to write for. Help!**

**Reb:** There is a variety of student papers at YU, and you can choose which paper to write for based on your specific interests and preferred writing style. The Commentator includes news, editorials, features, opinions, business, and media. It covers global news as well as YU specific news, and it is a great option if you enjoy reporting on current events. The Commentator also includes opinion pieces, so it is perfect if you're looking to share an opinion you feel passionate about. The Commentator also posts business-related articles, so if that is a topic that piques

your interest, you should definitely consider writing for The Commentator. Similarly, the *YU Observer* covers news, features, opinions, business, arts and culture, science and technology, and editorials. Because the *YU Observer* covers such a wide range of topics, you can essentially think of any topic that interests you and ask an editor if that topic is something you can write about. The editor will most likely say yes, unless another student is already writing a similar piece. If you want to get involved but are unsure what to write about, join the *YU Observer* [writers' chat](#) on Whatsapp. Editors send topics that they want students to write about, and if you're interested in the topic you can privately respond to the editor. This is an easy way to get ideas on what to write about if you're having trouble coming up with a topic. If you're more interested in creative writing, then “YU Journal of the Arts” (YUJA) YU Active Minds's publication, “The Breather,” or “Something Rich and Strange,” YU's literary magazine, may be the paper for you! Students write short stories and poems for this publication, and it is perfect for students who enjoy expressing themselves through these mediums.

**Q: Does “Ask Reb” mean these questions are being sent to a Rabbi? If so, who?**

**Reb:** Questions sent to “Just Ask Reb” are not sent to a Rabbi. They are sent to an

anonymous student at Stern College for Women.

**Q: I'm having a lot of trouble choosing my career path. I've always wanted to be a doctor, but I don't know if I really want to continue with all the rigorous pre-med courses, plus go to medical school. I want to eventually have a family and be able to spend time with them. My other option is becoming a Judaic studies teacher. I love sharing Torah with others, but I don't know if by becoming a teacher I would be "giving up" on my dream of becoming a doctor. What should I do?**

**Reb:** It is very difficult to become a doctor, and you must be prepared to take rigorous courses and exams over the course of many years. You must be motivated to study and willing to make sacrifices. It is possible to become a doctor and spend time with your family, but in order to do this, you may have to wake up very early or go to bed very late to accomplish everything you want to do each day. Everyone has the same 24 hours in the day, and each person decides how he or she will spend these hours. You may have to miss out on social events or other leisure activities to study effectively while also having time to spend with your family. That being said, becoming a doctor is very rewarding, and once you finish your years of training you will be able to spend every day helping others.

However, becoming a Judaics studies teacher can be equally rewarding, but it has challenges of its own. You will have the opportunity to influence students in a meaningful way, but making an impact is not easy. Students may not want to listen to what you have to say, and it is difficult to keep students engaged. However, you will have the potential to positively change someone's spiritual life. All this being said, what you should choose depends on your individual skills and interests. If you're passionate about science, are motivated to study, and don't mind being busy all the time, then becoming a doctor is the job for you. If you are patient, love giving over ideas, and enjoy connecting with students, then becoming a Judaic studies teacher is the path you should choose. Both career paths have positive and negative aspects, and it's up to you to weigh these factors to make your decision.

## The Comedic Legacy of The Office

By Sarah Brill, Science and Technology Editor



One of the most cringy TV shows that captivated viewers worldwide was "The Office" (2005-2013). "The Office" takes a unique approach to

comedy TV in many ways. One of those was by making the TV show as a "mockumentary". A "mockumentary" is a type of television taking the approach of documentary TV with a comedic twist. "The Office" is set in a stereotypical office setting with your average employees. The boss for the majority of the seasons, Michael Scott, played by Steve Carell, is portrayed as the boss of Dunder-Mifflin Scranton, the main set of this mockumentary. Single-handedly, Michael Scott is both able to portray a great boss during the time being, but also shows a lack of consideration for other people or demonstrates an immature attitude which plays off as comedic gold.

For example, in one episode, all of the characters, both office workers and warehouse workers, are in the warehouse. In this scene, the warehouse employee wishes to convey the importance of warehouse safety, emphasizing that the office worker should not be touching any of the devices. Michael Scott continually interrupts by saying that he can and will occasionally touch these deadly items against the strong assessment by the warehouse employee. This incredibly frustrating scene combines both cringe with comedy by showing the stupidity of Michael Scott and the irritation of the warehouse employees.

Aside from Michael, all the other employees bounce off of each other in a way that turns

this show into pure comedic gold. We have Jim Halpert, played by John Krasinski, and Pam Beesly, played by Jenna Fischer who compliment each other beautifully not only in their ever-evolving romantic relationship, but also in the way they play comedic pranks on their gullible co-worker Dwight Schrut, played by Rainn Wilson. In a secret relationship for many seasons, Dwight and Angela, played by Angela Kinsley, play off each other's strict personalities to create and solve non-existent problems in the office. Both of these characters attempt to use logic to solve their problems and the office's problems, but most of these attempts backfire.

Located in the annex of the office space are co-workers Kelly, played by Mindy Kaling, and Ryan, played by B.J. Novak, who have a continuous on-again, off-again relationship, but what is the pinnacle of their dynamic is the over exaggeration of the female psyche portrayed by Kelly. She is the embodiment of the stereotypical "dumb blonde" with over-the-top reactions to everything Ryan does. Both of these sets of relationships play a crucial role in maintaining the comedic framework of this mockumentary.

Side characters such as Stanley Hudson (Leslie David Baker), Kevin Malone (Brian Baumgartner), and Andy Bernard (Ed Helms) play characters that are the epitome of the bored workers, the stupid

worker, and the annoying worker, respectively. These are accurate depictions of some personalities that might be found in the typical cubicle workplace which makes the show both relatable and realistic.

Both the cast, setting, and film style compliment each other in creating a TV show that is both a unique type of comedy, and one that would be a precursor for others to follow.

## Insider Tips for Free Things To Do In New York City

By Abigail Grigoryan



New York City is a place that is as diverse as it is unique and with an expensive reputation! This doesn't mean you can't find some events and activities that are completely free. You just have to know where to look! Check out these awesome tips to make the most of your New York experience!

### 1. Get the Eventbrite App

You can use the Eventbrite app to find and get tickets to for events you're interested in. They have a whole section of just free events and classes to try. You can also use the app to reference tickets to events you're registered to attend.

### 2. Sign up for The Skint

This daily newsletter combines all of the free or budget-friendly activities happening in New York each day. When you sign up for their newsletter, these deals and activities are sent directly to your inbox each day.

### 3. Check out Art Galleries

In Chelsea, there are dozens of free-admission galleries showcasing innovative paintings, installations, and sculptures. This is a great way to be introduced to the art scene and the shows frequently change so you won't be bored!

### 4. Check out the Brooklyn flea Market

Open every Sunday from 10 a. m. until 5 p.m, Williamsburg Flea has around 150 vendors, selling everything from vintage collectibles to handmade

clothing and other interesting art items. The flea market also has a space that overlooks the Manhattan skyline.

### 5. Check out the Bushwick Collective

Made by Bushwick native Joe Ficalora, the Brooklyn Collective is an unofficial graffiti museum that brings together New York City's top street artists. Through multiple buildings and several blocks, you see their artwork all on the surface.

### 6. Indulge in Free Lectures at the MET

The Metropolitan Museum of Art provides free lectures through the MET Speaks program. These lectures focus on current exhibitions, conservation projects, and the museum's collection.

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