

# The Yeshiva University OBSERVER

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## Governor Cuomo Signs Democracy Protection Act at YU

Ailin Elyasi  
Junior News Editor

YU's Cardozo School of Law had the honor of inviting Governor Cuomo to sign New York State's Democracy Protection Act into law on April 18th. Cardozo Dean Melanie Leslie, President Ari Berman, and famous first amendment lawyer Floyd Abrams looked on as the New York became the first state to pass legislation that brings accountability and transparency to political ads on all social media platforms.

The Democracy Protection Act has become necessary due to the increased foreign involvement in the 2016 presidential election, especially on social media. With 69% of Americans using some sort of social media, facebook and twitter have become influential information sharing sites capable of shaping political opinions, even though they do not have the same transparency and oversight as traditional print and digital ads. For instance, 126 million Americans are estimated to have seen Russian sponsored Facebook ads, and over 131,000 political tweets were linked to Russian accounts around the time of the 2016 election.

The act intends on prohibiting foreign involvement in New York elections by requiring all digital ad buyers to register as independent expenditure committees, as



they would when purchasing TV time and other traditional ads. The act also requires that ads clearly disclose when they are not authorized by any candidate and clearly state who paid for the ad. There is also a \$1,000 fine to any TV or Radio station that fails to comply with the new regulations.

"The election meddling this nation

experienced in the 2016 presidential election was inconceivable, unacceptable and undermined the very values our democracy stands for," said Governor Cuomo during the signing. "New York is the first state in the nation to take action to put an end to foreign influence in our elections, and by signing this legislation, we will bring transparency to all online

political ads including those on social media, and restore fairness and honesty to the electoral process for generations to come."

President Ari Berman spoke of the values that Cardozo represents, saying "I am particularly proud to welcome you to

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## The Failure of Stern's Torah U'Mada

Elka Wiesenberg  
Junior Features Editor

There has been so much controversy about the value of women's Torah at Yeshiva University. Instead of following our emotions, which is what leads to our underappreciation in certain circles of Judaism, let's look at the facts—without discussing the patriarchy we already know exists. We need to get to the root of the issue: what exactly are women's roles in Torah at YU?

Yeshiva University is known for its iconic motto of "Torah U'Mada"—Torah and sciences, equal parts of a Modern Orthodox Jew's education. The university's dual curriculum for its undergraduate students promises vigorous learning and thorough knowledge of Judaic and general studies. YU is an institution that prides itself in having high standards for both of these essential aspects of a Modern Orthodox life.

At Stern College for Women, Torah U'Mada is operationalized with a Judaic core: a number of semesters, based on a student's previous years of post-high-school Torah study, that she must be enrolled in at least 8-9 credits of Judaic studies, presumably matching the amount of secular education that she is getting.

This sounds like the ideal combination

of a Torah education with a Mada one. Theoretically, it means that women are spending as much time learning Bible and Talmud as Sociology and Physics. However, when these classes are put on a transcript, the numbers reveal an ugly truth: Torah falls short of being equal to secular classes. The 2-3 minimum number of Judaic classes for CORE, advertised as 8-9 credits, that each Stern student pours her effort into each semester, are translated into only six credits. Somehow, the actual class value is trimmed down by thirty-three percent. This seems to reflect how much YU really considers its women's Torah to be worth; in comparison to other subjects, the rate is 2/3.

YU's excuse for this reduction of credits, as explained during orientation, is that having too many "unusual" class credits on a transcript looks suspicious to graduate schools, or to any institution reviewing these transcripts. I find it preposterous to determine that nine credits of "Hebrew Studies" per semester reflects drastically differently on a transcript, even to an outsider's perspective, from six such credits.

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## Women's Tennis Team to Play in NCAA Division III Tournament for First Time Ever—On the First Day of Finals

Mindy Schwartz  
Editor in Chief

Even as finals kick into high gear for the majority of Stern students, a select few will begin a different sort of challenge next week. For the first time ever, YU's women's tennis team will be competing in the NCAA Division III Tournament for women's tennis beginning May 10th—the first day of finals. The team won the Sky-line Conference championship this past October, making them the first women's team in YU history to qualify for a NCAA Division III Tournament.

The timing of the tournament presented some issues to the YU team. The first day of the conference is scheduled for the first day of finals, so accommodations needed to be made for team members facing tournament and final overlap. Assistant Coach Danielle Carr said that any students who are "academically eligible to play have been permitted to adjust their finals schedules to be able to play and take exams."

Tennis team member Hannah Brodskaya, SCW '19, said that "although

finals time is super frustrating, intense, and busy, the academic advisors really helped with rescheduling the finals that conflicted with the tournament and I'm personally much happier with my finals schedule now than how it was before." She told The Observer that members of the team were allowed to reschedule finals that conflicted with the first two days of the tournament. "If we get past those [days], then we'll have to figure out the rest, but for now we just rescheduled finals that were on May 10th and 11th."

Another concern with the date of the tournament was the brief rumor that the the tournament would be scheduled for Shavuot, and that it would need to be moved to accommodate the YU team. When asked about this possible scheduling conflict, Coach Naomi Kaszovitz responded that "the matches [which] are scheduled by the NCAA, were always scheduled for May 10th as far as I know. I think people were speculating that it may

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## YU's Conflict of Interest Policy: Lessons in Student Journalism

Mindy Schwartz  
Editor in Chief



Earlier this year, as I was researching YU's financial situation to prepare for an interview with President Berman, I came upon an enlightening, and also deeply troubling article about our school. Published in 2014, the article, titled "How to Lose \$1 Billion: Yeshiva University Blows Its Future On Loser Hedge Funds" by Steven Weiss, described the full extent of YU's financial problems and how those problems were really caused. It also led me on an almost half a year long investigative journey, which unfortunately did not end in a ground breaking news piece, but did end with some important realizations about the practice of student journalism.

If you ask most people how YU got into its financial mess around 2008, they will probably tell you that YU had heavily invested in Bernie Madoff's ponzi scheme hedge fund. This is what I would have said before reading Weiss' article and what I have heard from many students, faculty, and community members over the years. But a two year investigation, as relayed in Weiss' article, revealed that YU's losses to Madoff represented just a small fraction of their overall losses, which were primarily caused by a reckless investment strategy. Under President Joel's leadership the school invested almost entirely in high risk investments like hedge funds, and moved away from safer investments like U.S. Treasury bonds. Although this high risk strategy paid off for a little while, when the financial meltdown came in 2008, these risky investments backfired, and between 2007 and 2009, the school's investment losses were valued at \$525 million—five times greater than the \$105 million it lost to Madoff.

While this whole article was upsetting to say the least, the most disturbing piece of the investigation in my eyes were the egregious conflicts of interest it revealed on YU's investment committee—even before Joel and his investment committee took over.

YU's policy for conflicts of interest since 1993 allowed board members and members of the investment committee to conduct business with YU, and even take personal returns on that business, as long as it was disclosed beforehand. In 2000, conflicts of interest generating significant personal returns for board and committee members amounted to more than 5% of YU's operating budget. In fact the very conflict of interest policy YU was operating under had actually been drafted by board member Ira Millstein, whose own law firm Weil, Gotshal & Manges, annually billed YU \$200,000 to \$500,000 for a number of years.

Under Joel these conflicts of interest shifted alongside the new investment strategy. Conflicts of interest took the shape of hedge fund investments in funds for which committee members worked, or even ran. Ezra Merkin, who served as the chair of the investment committee from 1993 to 2008, earned fees typical of hedge funds off the money YU invested in his fund Ascot Partners, a "feeder fund" to Madoff's ponzi scheme. The university invested well over a \$100 million with Merkin, and he earned over \$20 million off of YU's investments with him during his 15 years as chair of the committee.

After reading about the conflicts of interest in the investment committee I was shocked and concerned about my school. So I did some more digging to see if this problem was ever addressed. I came upon a letter from President Joel released on the YU news site just three days after Weiss' article was published, in which he defended the school's financial decisions and insisted that "beginning in 2009, as part of a comprehensive review of the university's governance practices, we established new oversight

practices for the University's investments." He defended the old conflict of interest policy as "in line with other major universities" but still asserted that the "with the help of leading experts in the field we enhanced our policy to make it best in class."

It struck me as odd that the university did not simply release their conflict of interest policy to prove to everyone that it was as "best in class" as Joel claimed. If they had truly changed their ways since 2009 then what did they have to hide?

As the editor in chief of one of the school's student newspapers, I was in fairly regular contact with the president's office over email, and so I simply emailed the president's media contact person asking if I could have access to the conflict of interest policy for the investment committee.

My email was ignored.

So I emailed again. This time I got a response—"YU's investments are professionally managed by our investment office with careful Board oversight and best-in-class conflict of interest policies are in place"—but no, "the policies are not available to the public."

Now I was hooked. If the policies were really "best in class" as Joel and now President Berman's office were telling me, why couldn't I see them. Sensing that further emails wouldn't get me anywhere, I decided to address my common sense question to President Berman directly, who I was conveniently interviewing for the paper in a few short days.

As it turned out, the current president did agree with me—at least in theory. I noted the past reports of conflicts of interests and asked him, "if we want to feel confident that nothing sketchy is going anymore, then why can't we just see the [conflict of interest] policy itself—not the actual investments, but just the commitments to honest financial dealings that the policy presumably upholds?" To which he responded "I mean I assume that things are public, [but] I will check." I informed him that his office had already told me that the policy wasn't public, and he assured me that he would look into it.

With the current president on record agreeing that it was common sense to release the policy, I had more leverage when I again emailed the president's office asking for a copy. But I was ignored again. So I waited a week and sent another email. It took about two months of unreplied emails and delays before I was finally told that "Rabbi Berman has looked into this matter and the policy will be made publicly available online in the coming days." I was sent a link to the PDF of the policy two days later.

Although the policy was—and still is—not "publicly available" on their website, I saw this as a huge victory for student journalism. I felt empowered as a student journalist, convinced now that I could do anything as long as I was persistent—and kept up a steady barrage of emails. But once I finally had the policy, I needed to figure out for myself if it really did improve upon the old policy uncovered in the investigation four years ago.

This was the hard part, I realized. While I could read the policy, try to make sense of it as best I could, and draw my own conclusions about whether improvements had really been made, I hesitated to publish an article with those conclusions. I am, after all, not an expert on finance or law by any measure and, like all legal policies, it was written in confusing jargon I often had to google. It wouldn't just be wrong for me to write an article drawing conclusions about the new policy, it would be foolish.

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## Governor Cuomo Signs Democracy Protection Act at YU

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the Cardozo School of Law, the school which exemplifies our core values from caring for the vulnerable, to safeguarding essential rights, to wrestling actively with the cutting edge innovation that will transform our future. I can think of no better host for this historic

occasion.”

Director of YU Governmental Affairs Jon Greenfield said “We are grateful to Governor Cuomo for including Yeshiva University as host to this historic event. Our Cardozo Law School has a proud tradition of graduating the elected leaders and legal minds that

help shape landmark policies like the Governor’s Democracy Protection Act. The Governor’s visit to campus strengthens students’ understanding of this critical relationship and furthers the great partnership between YU and the state.”

## Women’s Tennis Team to Play in NCAA Division III Tournament for First Time Ever—On the First Day of Finals

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be on Shavuot because [the tournament] is always [in] mid-May.”

Another issue that had come up amongst students was the attention YU gave to the men’s basketball team for their Skyline Conference win in February, as compared to the attention the school gave to the women’s tennis team for their victory. The men’s basketball team’s victory was met with great fanfare and school-wide celebration—ice cream trucks were even brought to each campus. Some students complained that although the women’s tennis team had accomplished the same thing as the men’s basketball team—winning their Skyline Conference—they had not received the same sort of fanfare.

However both Kaszovitz and Carr disagreed with these complaints. “I think our win was publicized and highlighted very well by the administration. Amazing videos were sent out. We were highlighted at the YU Hanukkah dinner. Wherever we went people congratulated us. I got a lot of congratulatory texts, emails and calls from all over,” Kaszovitz asserted. She also felt that any discrepancies that did exist in the treatment of each team’s victory were logical, and not based on gender. “Though they didn’t give out free ice cream in our honor, nor did the TV networks interview us [this is likely because] basketball is more universal than tennis, so I get it. Plus it [was] “March Madness” across the country [at the time of their Division III Tournament] and so makes sense they got the coverage they did.”

Carr agreed that the the women’s team was appropriately and fairly celebrated. “The administration, [the] athletics [department], and [the] public have responded appropriately and excitedly to the women’s success...everyone was over the moon for us! I saw videos, internet pages, blog posts, and the girls said in the community there was much celebration and mention,” Carr told The Observer. Like Kaszovitz, she

attributed any greater coverage of the men’s victory to the fact that, simply, “tennis is not basketball.”

**“I think that the competition at the NCAA tournament will be tough, but these women have the drive and desire to compete and win”**

As the tournament fast approaches both Kaszovitz and Carr are confident in their team’s chances—at least in round one. “I think that the competition at the NCAA tournament will be tough, but these women have the drive and desire to compete and win,” said Carr. “Getting past the first round is a definite possibility, but

past that, we just have to wait and see. Whatever the outcome is, it has been a great year and this is something that the women can see is absolutely possible, [can] work towards in future seasons, and even strive to go beyond.”

Kaszovitz expressed a similar sentiment. “The NCAA is going to be a tough first round, but we will be adequately prepared for the challenge. It all depends who we get in the selection. We have a real shot at getting to the second round. Beyond that I couldn’t begin to speculate, but the sky’s the limit with these student athletes. They’ve got the will and the drive.”

They pointed out how hard the players have worked, both in the Fall on season and even in the Spring off season. To make sure they keep their game strong, team members “played in the off season together, at clubs, had coaching, [and] they have been present in off season practices” said Carr. “They really pushed themselves on the courts in the Fall, we are hoping to recreate that momentum now in the Spring,” said Kaszovitz.

Although being part of the team is hard work, Brodskaya thinks it is definitely worth it. “I really enjoy being on the team. Everyone is really dedicated and although balancing school and athletics isn’t easy, the coaches and the team make it fun...Making the tournament was an amazing feat of accomplishment that the team worked really hard to achieve.”

Team member Rachel Slater, SCW ‘18, has also been pleased with experience on the team. “I’ve really enjoyed being a part of Stern’s tennis team; I loved the group of girls on the team and the bond we’ve built throughout the year, as well as getting to play a sport I love in a Jewish institution. Being on the women’s tennis team has been one my highlights of my college career.”





## 2018 Giving Day Raises \$4.5 Million—\$1.5 Million More Than Its Original Goal

Sara Marcus

On April 26th, YU held its second annual Day of Giving, which successfully raised \$4,538,747 from 3,004 donors. The campaign was such a success that it surpassed its goal of \$3 million and even surpassed its bonus goal of \$3.8 million. The 2018 theme was “YU Heroes,” with ads showing students in capes and superhero gear. Alysa Herman, the Director of Institutional Advancement, explained the meaning behind the theme was twofold; “[YU] students have these heroic qualities and [President Berman] has charged our students to use [their]...education to improve the world. So we wanted to celebrate our students who are heroes and also our faculty and students across all our schools...I think everyone can think of someone on campus or a graduate who is a hero.”

Like last year, all donations were matched by a select group of YU supporters. During the two hour bonus round, all donations were quadrupled. The donations will be spread across YU high schools, undergraduate schools, graduate schools, and other programs like student scholarships funds. Jennifer Cahn, Director of Annual Giving said, “[We’ve] experienced great success. What’s been really exciting is that we’ve gotten donations directed to all of our different schools and programs; from undergrad to RIETS to Cardozo and beyond. And what’s most encouraging is that many of our students have stepped up to the plate and have made their own gifts, whether to Senior Class Gift or to other student-based initiatives.”

Giving Day was promoted in the weeks preceding with the social media campaign #YUHero. Famous friends of the university, such as Senator Chuck Schumer, Yankees hero Mariano Rivera, and Washington Heights neighbor Lin-Manuel Miranda made videos voicing their support. Miranda, the Pulitzer-prize winning playwright who narrated a fundraising video in 2016, said in his pitch, “Yeshiva are amazing neighbors here in Washington Heights, and they have programs that benefit not just the Washington Heights neighborhood, but all over New York, so I hope you find it in your heart to give to them.”

Over the course of the day, on both the Wilf and Beren Campuses, there were activities and opportunities for students to get involved. Last year there had been criticism that Wilf received a disproportionate amount of events in honor of Giving Day. This year, Herman promised, “We are cognizant of [that]. It’s been



intentional to make it good and appropriate for our women...we specifically looked for female student input so we could avoid that.” Herman did just that on March 14th, when several student leaders had the chance to speak to President Berman and others in charge of organizing the Giving Day. Student leaders like Rebecca Kerzner, editor-in-chief of the YU Perspective, and Liorah Rubinstein, President of SCDS, sat in a boardroom with President Berman, the social media team, donors and deans of the school to discuss improving the campaign.

On the day of the campaign, Wilf offered food trucks and a calling center for both Yeshiva College and Stern College students to help call potential donors and take pledges. At Beren, there was also food and YU swag freely available.

On both campuses, students were encouraged to write to donors and teachers, and there was a heavy emphasis on spreading the word on social media. Both campuses had space set aside for posing and posting pictures. Throughout the day, there were online puzzles and trivia games to win funds for specific programs, and for students to win vouchers for restaurants.

Stern Junior Rachel Zakharov, who volunteered downtown at Stern College, posted pictures with faculty members, one of which was retweeted by the YU account. She took part in the #YUHero challenge and won.

“I won the #YUHero challenge, so I got to donate

\$5,000. I got to allocate to any program or school of my choice, and I chose the YU scholarship fund,” says Zakharov. “I had a great time. It was so much fun doing it with all my friends and having to call people. I thought it was run pretty well. I thought the staff were pretty engaging. They were walking up to the students, telling them to participate in things, and write thank you notes.”

Students as a whole liked #YUHero. Liorah Rubinstein, SCW ‘18, lauded the campaign. “As a graduating senior, it’s important to me to see to the continued success of my soon to be alma mater. For me it is not about the dollars and cents; it is about the student body, faculty and extended YU family rallying together in support of something we feel is worth fighting for.”

Others, however, felt that the campaign should have allowed for more extensive campus involvement. “I found the #YUHeroes to be a rather exclusive campaign. As opposed to #IamYU, which allowed every student who so wished to express their pride in YU, this campaign required one to be nominated. Effectively this led to only a certain segment of the YU population being promoted as YU heroes, while most of the student body was ignored.” said Miriam Klahr, SCW ‘18.

## YU Continues to Participate in Program Offering Financial Aid to Private Colleges

Sarah Casteel

Senior News Editor

Yeshiva University will continue to participate in Governor Cuomo’s new Enhanced Tuition Awards program for the 2018-2019 Academic year. The New York State program, which started in 2017, offers aid to students attending private undergraduate institutions in light of recent legislation which will provide a free public college education to many students.

Criticisms of the program include possible residency and work restrictions, which may limit students even after they have graduated from college. This means that students on the program may be required to live and work in New York post-graduation, possibly for several years. Another criticism and reservation of schools that opted out is that the schools in the program are required to match the funding that the state offers. A total of \$6,000 may be earned, and for example, if the program offers \$2,000, the participating school will also have to offer \$2,000, equaling \$4,000 total for the student. The program also requires the colleges to offer a tuition freeze for students receiving funding, meaning that their tuition when they enter the school will be “frozen,” or unsusceptible to increase, through the duration of that student’s time at the school. As costs for private institutions rise annually, so does tuition, and this would

limit the schools in their ability to collect the necessary funds needed to keep the school running and improving. However, the required “freeze” on tuition would only apply for the students enrolled in the Enhanced Tuition Awards Program.

With students unexpectedly receiving higher bills each year, YU has been criticized for not implementing a tuition freeze, which has been a trend in a number of colleges in recent years. “My dad called me and asked why my tuition was almost \$2,000 more than last semester, and it was the first I had ever heard of a tuition raise,” said one student.

The timing of the program also causes reservations, as most schools completed and sent out their financial aid packages prior to the program being implemented.

Despite the many criticisms of and reservations about the program, Yeshiva University is one of the around 30% of eligible private colleges who have decided to participate. The primary appeal of the program is the possibility of additional financial aid which may allow students to have an easier time attending and paying for college. This is also appealing to some of the schools who opted out, and have stated that they may consider opting into the program in the future.

With a niche population of students from which to select for admission, Yeshiva University recognizes its need to offer financial support to allow all students who desire to be in a Jewish institution that opportunity. Unfortunately, financial losses following financial mismanagement and the 2008 financial crash have made it more difficult for the school to provide adequate scholarship funds for all students who need them. Luckily, loans and outside scholarships have been able to supplement many students’ tuition fees so that they are still able to attend the school. Merit scholarships offered for programs such as the school’s honors program have depleted significantly, from full ride offers to what is now a maximum of around a half scholarship of \$20,000, only given to select students.

Participation in the new Enhanced Tuition Awards program will require the school to freeze tuitions for participating students and match funds to award recipients, even if the school later decides to opt out of the program for incoming students. YU’s decision to opt into the program despite the several strict rules and requirements is indicative of their attempts to work with students to offer as much financial aid as possible.



## The Cosmic Successor

Rivka Reiter

*See further. See deeper. The journey begins.*

That's how NASA's trailer for the new James Webb Space Telescope ends. The \$8.8 billion telescope is set to replace the Hubble Telescope, almost thirty years after the original launched.

The Hubble Telescope, a school-bus sized space telescope, has been orbiting the Earth since 1990, answering questions about the age of the universe (13.7 billion years!) and seeing as far 13.2 light-years away (pretty darn far).

The new James Webb Space Telescope (JWST) is bigger, better, and colder. After it's settled at its Lagrange Point 930,000 miles away from the Earth (a point where it can be gravitationally stable, rotating at the same speed as the Earth and taking photos of outer space without being blocked by the Earth or the Sun), it will expand its 300m<sup>2</sup> sunshields—basically a giant, tennis court-sized umbrella—to keep it cool. The telescope uses heat-based sensors (infrared tech, like in night vision goggles) to find galaxies, so it needs to be kept as cool as possible. That's why the sunshield is made of five vacuum-sealed layers, so it keeps the heat from passing from layer to layer, kinda like your portable coffee mug might.

The Hubble has taken incredible photos over the years, and has helped us find some planets in what is called the "Habitable Zone," planets that are similar enough to Earth that they could possibly host life, even if not ours. Last August, the Hubble found some planets, called Trappist-1, that are within the Habitable Zone. The Pillars of Creation, one of the most iconic of Hubble's photos, shows stars forming in the Eagle Nebula. Meanwhile, the JWST is going on a search for the universe's "first light," to see how galaxies are formed and evolve, to study the birth of stars, and even to learn more about planets light-years away, like their atmospheres and "perhaps even [to] find the building blocks of life."

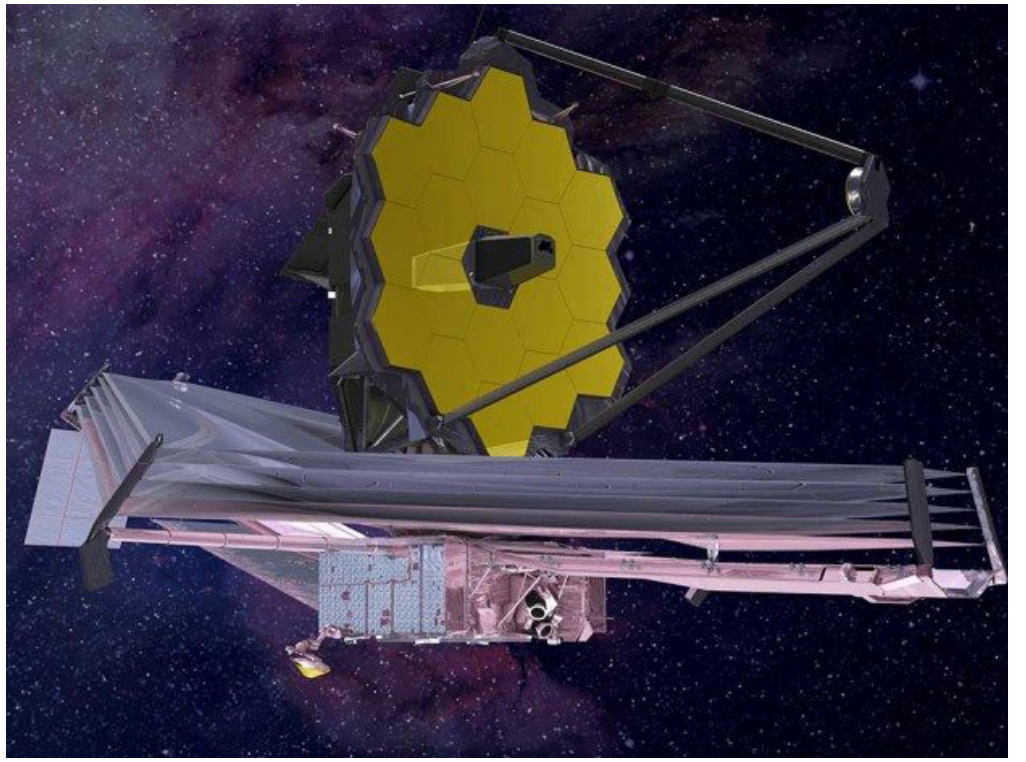
All of the pictures of the telescope show this giant golden honeycomb. JWST's primary mirror is six times larger than Hubble in area. In order to make it aerodynamic enough to launch, the mirror is made up of 18 hexagonal segments, made of gold-coated beryllium, that will unfold after launch. The mirror is what makes it possible for the telescope to see so far, discovering stars that are 400 times fainter than what any other

telescope can see. In other words, the faintest star that you can see when you look up at night? Ten billion times fainter than that one.

After the month the JWST spends travelling to the Lagrange Point (that point of stability I mentioned,) tiny explosions will force open the gigantic mirrors. The telescope weighs around 14,000 pounds, about the weight of a school bus, and is going to be as tall as a football field and it's going to rest on rubber shock absorbing cushions, so that if any space particles hit the telescope or the sun shields, it won't be knocked off-balance.

Dr. Edward Belbruno, a current math teacher at Yeshiva College, has worked on and off for NASA in the past as a celestial mechanic, a job as cool as it sounds, designing flight projections at the Jet Propulsion Lab in California. "What can go wrong in a spacecraft usually goes wrong," he said, trying to explain why an unfolding telescope is so complicated, and why so much testing needs to be done. If something really does go wrong out there, the telescope is 1,000,000 miles from Earth and has no way of being fixed. It was designed with a dock, on the off chance that NASA decided to send a team to fix it in the future, but right now the Lagrange Point is too far away for any plans of sending a team to fix it if something doesn't go according to plan.

The launch is still far away as more and more testing is done on the nearly-finished spacecraft. In December, the mirrors came out of cryo testing—they were cryogenically frozen, like something from a science fiction movie (we're basically living in one!).



They were frozen for 100 days in a thermal vacuum in preparation for the frigid, airless, environment of space, and were tested again and again.

"We don't even know what 90% of the universe is," said Dr. Belbruno. The corner of his lip was curled up in a smile; it was obvious that he was thrilled to be talking about the telescope, even while sitting in an empty classroom, squeezed into a tiny desk. He told me about the times he worked with the project manager, Dr. John Mather, on some previous projects. "They have someone in charge who really knows what he's doing," Belbruno declared, "They couldn't have made a better choice."

As of now, the James Web Space Telescope is set to launch in May 2020 from the French-owned Ariane 51 launch pad, but the launch date has already been pushed back twice, so it may again. NASA and the European Space Agency have been working closely to make this launch successful. In the words of Dr. Belbruno, "This has the potential to revolutionize our understanding of the universe." To see further. To see deeper. So it's time to let the journey begin.

## Will Lab-Grown Meat Find Its Way to Your Table?

Rina Krautwirth

In August of 2013, a turning point for the food industry occurred when scientists for the first time demonstrated that they could grow a hamburger in the lab from just a few cells of an animal. Since then, much research has gone into developing this innovation, and a number of companies have sprung up that aim to bring this product to the public. Two such companies include Memphis Meats in San Francisco and Mosa Meat in the Netherlands, which have both raised capital toward bringing affordable lab-grown meat to the general market. Mosa Meat, which describes itself as a "spin out" from the original lab that demonstrated that first hamburger, promotes its product as biologically the same as regular beef. Three Israeli startups—Super Meat, Future Meat Technologies, and Meat the Future—have joined in as well. Super Meat works on lab-grown chicken and Future Meat Technologies even has plans for technology that could enable consumers to grow their own meat.

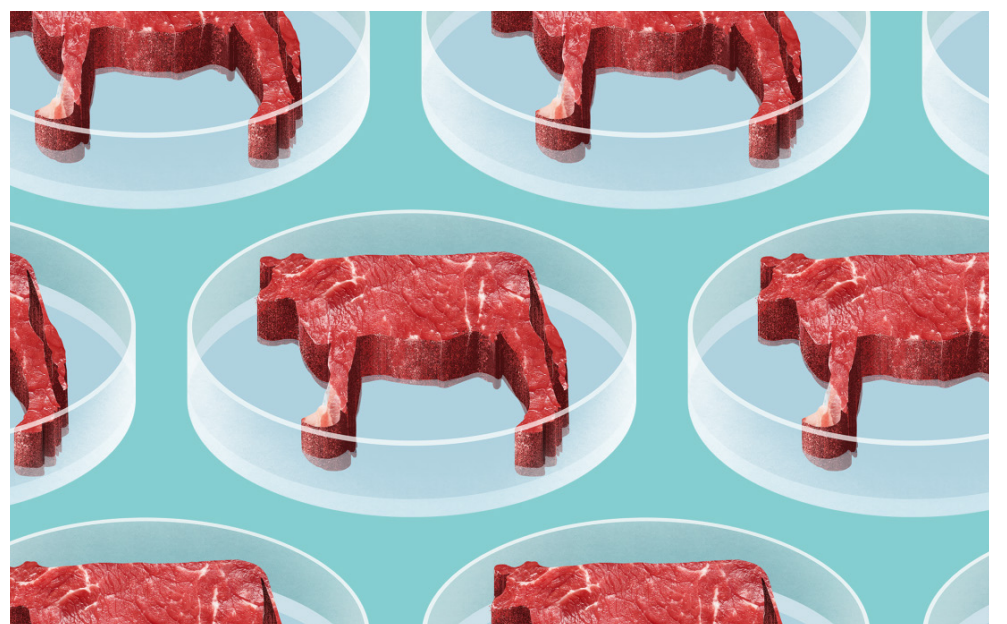
The idea of lab-grown meat, also called "clean meat," means good news for animal rights advocates, as this innovation could reduce or even eliminate the need to slaughter animals for food. Moreover, in terms of environmental considerations, this new method possibly could reduce the carbon footprint generated by using farm animals for food. Another significant benefit of in vitro meat is that it potentially could alleviate food shortages by providing a more efficient alternative to the current meat production process.

In spite of all the potential benefits, research has shown varying attitudes toward lab-grown meat within different demographics. Overall, 65.3% of those surveyed by scientists for an article published in the scientific journal Plos One definitely or probably would try lab-grown meat. However, in terms of long-term

engagement as opposed to just a try, the results of the research vary. Some respondents expressed concern over price—if lab-grown meat were to cost more than farmed meat—as well as over the taste and general appeal. Some also expressed concern over the effect that this new process would have on the farming industry. Economic status, meat eater or not, and even political affiliation all factored into respondents' reactions to the idea of lab-grown meat with vegetarian or vegan, lower income, and politically liberal respondents sounding more receptive to the idea. Interestingly, presenting the subjects of three different studies with positive information about "clean meat" led those subjects to develop more positive attitudes toward the idea.

For the Jewish population, additional questions arise as to the halakhic ramifications of meat grown in a lab. Firstly, could such meat be considered kosher even if the cells derived from a non-kosher animal? Secondly, would you be able to eat this meat together with dairy? Rabbis have weighed in on these questions with differing answers.

Rabbi Menachem Genack, CEO of the Orthodox Union's Kosher Division, explained that using "clean



meat" would have a number of advantages, both in general, and to the kosher consumer in particular. He cells or DNA from animals, growing cells in the lab, and then producing the product industrially, its use would eliminate the need for animals. This innovation also would have a positive impact on the environment, given that the amount of greenhouse gas generated by cattle in the United States exceeds the amount generated by cars. Additionally, for the kosher consumer, using lab-grown meat would mean a reduction in the cost of meat. Typically, approximately only 18-20 percent of the slaughtered cow gets used for kosher meat (the rest gets sent to the non-kosher market); due to the prohibition of eating the gid hanasheh (sciatic nerve), the hindquarters do not get used and because of the need for glatt, only

continued on page 6



## Will Lab-Grown Meat Find Its Way to Your Table?

*continued from page 5:*

approximately half of the forequarters gets used. The ability to use the entire product of clean meat would increase efficiency and reduce cost for the kosher consumer.

The question though remains: Is lab-grown meat considered kosher? According to Rabbi Genack, based on the principle of hayotzei min ha assur assur (that which derives from something forbidden also is forbidden), the cells used for the process of lab-grown meat would need to derive from a ritually slaughtered (shekhted) kosher animal. In such a case, we then could consider lab-grown meat kosher. This same principle, that something that derives from something not kosher also is not kosher, means that milk from a non-kosher mammal or eggs from a non-kosher bird also are not kosher. Similarly, cells from an animal would fall into the same category.

Would such meat be considered meat or pareve? Some opinions say yes and some say no. Rabbi Asher Weiss, a consultant for the OU from Israel, maintains that the product should be considered meat, whereas Rabbi Hershel Schechter of YU considers it pareve. As a reason to consider the product as meat, it looks like meat and genetically is meat. As logic to consider it pareve, the meat is not exactly from the animal. Rabbi Genack maintains that the OU most likely would follow the stricter opinion and would consider this product as meat. All and all, Rabbi Genack views this as very exciting technology with many opportunities for positive change.

Rabbi Yuval Cherlow, Director of Tzohar's Jewish

Ethics Center in Israel, agrees with the benefits of utilizing lab-grown meat, as he points to a religious and ethical benefit in terms of the current process of manufacturing meat, the amount of resources (water and land) currently needed to produce meat, and the amount of pollution generated from the meat production process as of now. Rabbi Cherlow differs, however, on the halakhic nature of this product. He maintains that since the end product has been so greatly changed from its original form, it no longer has a connection to its original source, and thus you could eat lab-grown meat together with milk! Rabbi Cherlow explains that this topic has a similarity (not equality) to the kashrut issues involved with gelatin. He points to those who rule that we can eat gelatin made from a non-kosher animal because the final product has gone through so much processing that it no longer has a connection to the original animal. Moreover, according to this logic, Rabbi Cherlow would also consider lab-grown meat that derives from a non-kosher animal permissible to eat.

Regarding the differentiation between lab-engineered cells and clones, Rabbi Cherlow maintains that since the case of clones involves a live animal, we still would consider the product to be meat. In contrast, lab-engineered cells involve "a piece of something that never was alive and was not connected to something alive." Rabbi Cherlow points out that a halakhic decision has not yet been rendered on the issue of lab-grown meat and that he thinks that as the product becomes an actuality, there will be a large halakhic dispute about both cloned and engineered cells.

Another kashrut issue that arises with regard to lab-grown meat is the possibly that the serum used to culture the cells might derive from animal blood. According to Rabbi Genack, the blood would get removed, and thus would not cause an issue. Rabbi Cherlow likewise does not see a problem with this, and, moreover, does not think that the serum would render the product meat. He explains that some would forbid the product based on this issue, but views them as not part of the mainstream. Some too would maintain that the serum causes the product to become meat, but Rabbi Cherlow thinks that "it is not necessary to arrive at this conclusion." Independent of kashrut, not necessarily would animal-based serum be used anyway.

All this for now remains hypothetical, as lab-grown meat has yet to hit the market in any practical way. On the other hand, projections for when the product could become commercially available include the year 2021, just three years down the line. One company, Hampton Creek (now called JUST, Inc.), even said in 2017 that it could get the product to the market by 2018, albeit with some skepticism. The original hamburger demonstrated in 2013 cost \$330,000. Improvements in the technology used to produce lab-grown meat and decreasing the cost of its production have become key factors in bringing the product from the lab to the market. As early as 1931, Winston Churchill wrote, "We shall escape the absurdity of growing a whole chicken in order to eat the breast or wing, by growing these parts separately under a suitable medium." Potentially, in the not too distant future, this futuristic-sounding idea of eating meat grown in a lab could become an actual reality.

## Faculty Spotlight: Exploring the Depth of Art with Marnin Young, Associate Professor of Art History

Talya Hyman

*Junior Features Editor*

Art Historian Dr. Marnin Young serves as the Associate Professor of Art History at Stern College for Women. Dr. Young's knowledge and passion for the art world is not only captivating, but infectious. It is with his eloquence and enthusiasm that Dr. Young instills within his students a newfound appreciation for analyzing art through a reflective and individualized lens. This summer he will be leading an art travel course where Yeshiva University students will have the opportunity to become immersed in Paris's vivid art culture and history. The Observer had the chance to speak to Dr. Young about art, teaching, and his summer course in Paris.

**Talya Hyman: What does art mean to you?**

**Marnin Young:** For me, art constitutes a rich and increasingly rare sensory experience that just isn't matched anywhere else in our contemporary world. But I also believe that the visual arts give us access to the ways human beings throughout time have understood themselves and their world. I very much like this doubleness in art—it has a sensual immediacy, but it ultimately belongs to the past.

**TH: When did you first fall in love with the art world?**

**MY:** I had always been immersed in what could be called the art world. My parents were trained as artists, and museums were a constant destination in my childhood. But I never thought of belonging to that world until I took an art history class my first semester in college. I knew right then and there that art history was my calling.

**TH: What's the best thing about being an art history professor?**

**MY:** Well, I get paid to do what I love. That's not bad. As an art historian, I get to travel a lot to do research in foreign archives and to see works of art in person. I love being able to dig into historical data and to unearth paintings I've never seen before. In the classroom, I have always enjoyed the format of the art history class, with its back and forth between the presentation of visual imagery, verbal exposition and discussion. Because images are provided right there, students have a very quick ability to test my claims. This keeps all of us on our feet and leads to really interesting conversations.

**TH: What do you think is a common misconception people have about art history?**

**MY:** I think there is often some confusion about the difference between art history and studio art or art history and art appreciation. As the name suggests, art history is a historical subject, and for better or worse

we really don't spend much time learning how to make works of art. Many art historians probably disagree, but I also try to minimize aesthetic questions of beauty, taste, or value. Or at least I try to turn them into historical questions. Students in my classes do understand how works of art are made and why some are maybe better made than others, but I hope they also come to see how these processes and evaluations are structured by cultural frames of understanding.

**TH: A lot of students are excited about the upcoming Paris, Capital of the Arts summer travel course. Have you led this course before, and what made it**



**special?**

**MY:** I've taught three previous summer courses in Europe: two in Paris and one in Rome. The first class in 2011 was built around an exhibition of the work of the nineteenth-century artist Edouard Manet. The second one, in 2014, was about Art and Revolution, and it was cross-listed with the Political Science department. In 2015, the Italy class thematized the persistence of classicism from antiquity to the nineteenth century, and it complemented a parallel course on Jewish History taught by Steven Fine. Each of these courses was unique, but they shared a very powerful sense of immersion in cultural history. We got to see a lot.

**TH: Why is studying art in Paris so significant and impactful?**

**MY:** Paris has an especially rich collection of museums. New York is probably its closest competitor, but there's nowhere else quite like it. In these summer courses, we spend a lot of time in front of major works of art that simply can't be seen anywhere else. This summer we're focusing on foreign artists who worked in Paris. So for example we'll have a chance to see exhibitions of paintings by Mary Cassatt, Pablo Picasso, and Marc Chagall, but we'll also look at artists from Leonardo to Delacroix in order to understand the emergence of Paris as the capital of the arts. The city used to be the undisputed center of artistic production and display, and it has preserved a lot of this history. When you're there you always get a visceral feel for what life was like for artists in the past.

**TH: Do you have an all time favorite work of art and/or artist?**

**MY:** I have lots of favorites, but I'm currently working on the painter Georges Seurat. His most famous painting is called A Sunday on La Grande Jatte, now in the Art Institute of Chicago. It shows a group of middle-class people leisurely sitting and walking in a park just to the west of Paris. It was painted in a new technique, called pointillism, which involved the meticulous application of tiny dots all over the surface of a huge canvas. The work was first exhibited in 1886, but I still feel it says something about the nature of modern life, how even leisure is controlled, managed, and laboriously produced. It is simultaneously a dreamlike escape from modern life and a critique of the very need to escape from modern life. It is visually compelling, complex, and profound, which is about all I would ever ask of a work of art.

**TH: What is one fact about art history/art that all students should know?**

**MY:** When the Mona Lisa was briefly stolen from the Louvre in 1911, more people came to look at the empty spot where it hung than had ever looked at the work itself. (Nobody needs to know this, of course, but it's a telling little detail about how artistic celebrity too often takes the place of real looking).

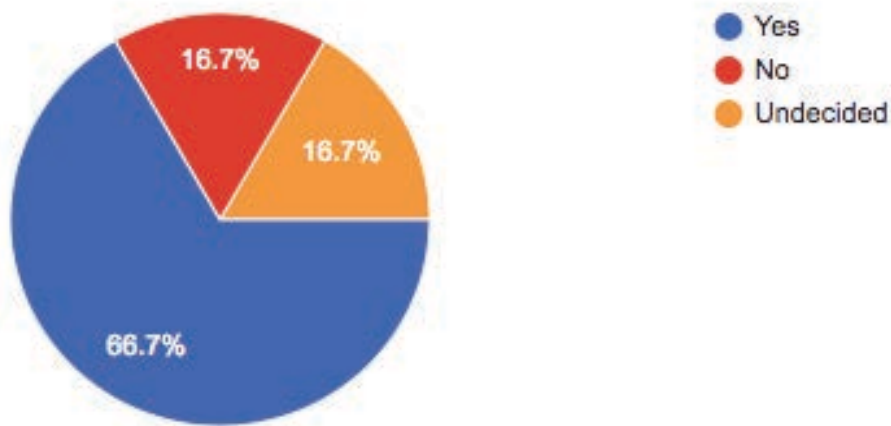
**TH: What do you hope your students take away from your courses, both in Paris and in the classroom?**

**MY:** I hope my students in New York and Paris all come away with a sense of the complex connection between, on the one hand, the works of art they see either in reproduction or in real life and, on the other hand, the rich historical context in which they were made. That, for me, is art history in a nutshell.

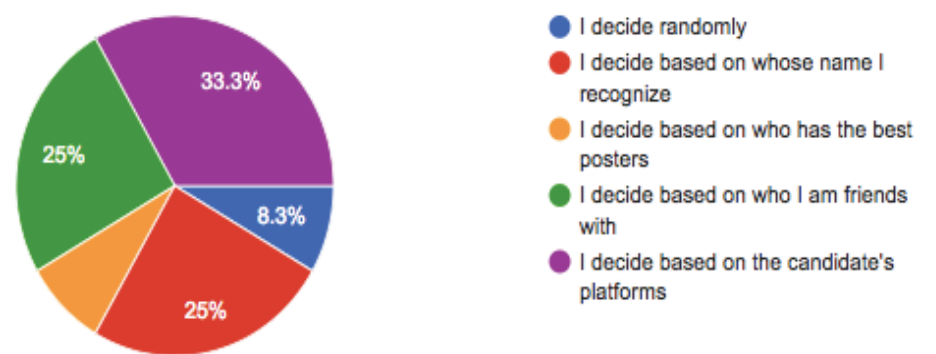
# STERN COLLEGE ELECTIONS

The Observer will be including a poll in our paper each month so readers can see what their fellow students think about what's new at Stern

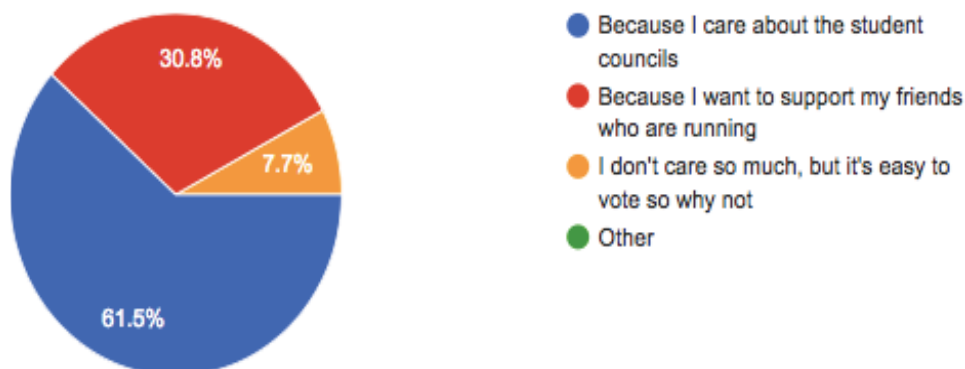
Do you plan to vote in Stern student council elections?



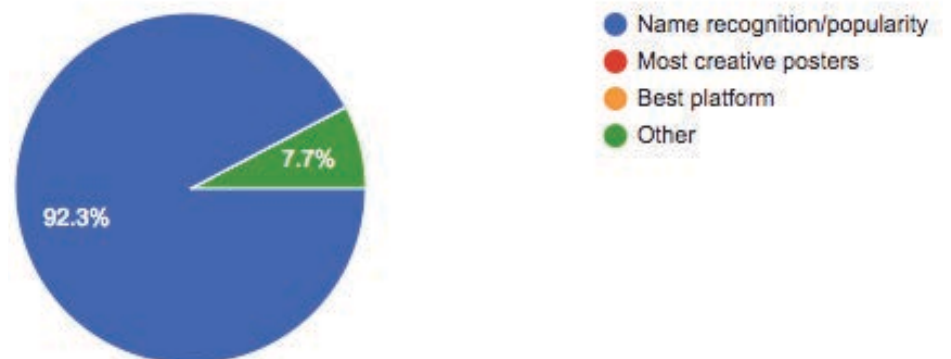
If yes, how will you decide who to vote for? (Pick the one that most applies)



If yes, then why will you vote?



What do you think most determines who wins the elections?



## What do you think could be done to improve elections for student councils at Stern?

“Clarify the role /power the positions hold. As it is I feel like it doesn’t matter it’s just so they can write it on a resume”

“Somehow have the administration openly encourage the students to vote based on who they think will be the most responsible and productive, and not just who they think is cooler”

“Make platforms more available to the student body. Have debates. All we really see is posters and Facebook posts so there’s not much to go on”





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## Academic Ghostwriting is Plagiarism

Kira Paley  
Senior Opinions Editor

Unfortunately, YU students are not strangers to cheating; this past academic year, multiple cheating scandals on both campuses have been brought to light, and new anti-cheating measures have even been implemented. The word “cheating” likely brings to mind an image of a student illicitly bringing information to a test or speaking to another student during an exam. There is another form of cheating, though, that haunts our institution and is rarely explicitly tagged as cheating: academic ghostwriting.

Even if you’re an English major, writing papers is usually a daunting and challenging task, especially during midterms and finals seasons. And if you’re not in a small Composition and Rhetoric class, the teacher likely does not recognize your writing style or abilities. So there’s an easy out: pay someone else to write your paper for you.

I once responded to a post in the Facebook group “Stern College: In The Know”, offering to edit a student’s essay for her composition class. I proofread the piece, marking where the grammar needed to be changed or a word was misspelled. As I presented the edited work to the student, she frowned. “I thought you were going to rewrite it,” she said. Her assumption was that “edit” meant “change”, and that I was going to rephrase sentences, add content, and perfect her thesis.

Then there are students who ask other students to write essays for them from scratch; this past week, a student offered to pay me \$300 to write a political science paper for her. Less than an hour ago, a Stern student posted on Facebook asking if there was anyone who wanted to write an English paper for her. There are

also people who offer to write papers for students; a few months ago, someone posted in the Facebook group YU Marketplace offering to write papers in virtually any subject for \$25 an hour.

At the beginning of English Composition, and in many other classes, students receive a brief lesson on the



multiple forms of plagiarism. Most students associate plagiarism with copying and pasting words from a source into their work; plagiarism, though, comes in all shapes and sizes and perhaps the most obvious form would be turning in a paper with your name on it that you did not write.

I understand that for a student studying biology, spending six hours slaving over a paper on Shakespeare

or Rousseau seems superfluous, and outsourcing the assignment to another student seems resourceful. Maybe some students feel as though the only way to do well on writing assignments is through buying someone else’s work. This willingness to hand in a completely plagiarized essay, though, signifies a combination of laziness and depravity that is antithetical to the values of a liberal arts institution, and frankly, the values of any honest human being.

I’ll admit that as a writer, it was hard for me to turn down \$300 for a paper that would probably not be so difficult; it’s cliché, but doing the right thing isn’t always easy. In this case, doing the right thing is simply working hard to increase knowledge and sharpen skills. But honestly, as pessimistic as this sounds, it doesn’t surprise me that college students would do anything to avoid hard work.

The majority of the students at this institution are moral, hard-working individuals with a commitment to ethics and learning, or at least that is my hope. To keep this hope alive, let’s create a culture where plagiarism is called by its name. Aside from proofreading, don’t edit anyone’s work without speaking to them about the changes. Don’t turn in work unless you wrote every single word that is not in quotations. Obviously, don’t ask other students to write papers for you. If someone asks you to write a paper for them, say no and politely explain how academic integrity is an integral value of our school and of any institution of higher learning.

## Letter to an Intermarrying Jew

Rachel Lelonek

Dear friend,

It has certainly been a while! How have you been? I hope school and work are treating you well. I miss seeing you as often as I used to, but I have been extremely busy with work, school and life in general. I hope that we can catch up soon.

I know writing you a letter may seem out of the blue. But there has been something on my mind for the longest time and I need to share my thoughts and feelings with you lest I keep them all inside.

I am writing to you today because I found out that you will be getting engaged soon (or perhaps you are engaged already and I did not yet find out). While I wish that I could offer you and your partner my congratulations and warmest wishes, I am conflicted and not sure if I can. You see, you are marrying someone who isn’t Jewish, a person who is out of our faith. This is someone whom I know you love, but not someone I can necessarily approve of.

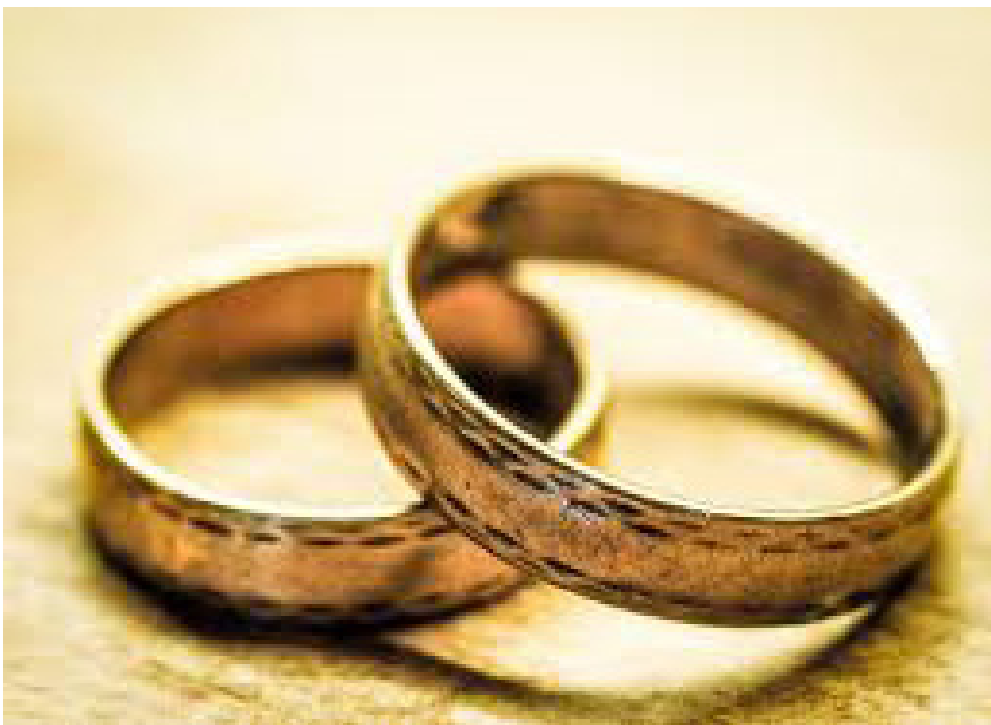
This letter is difficult for me to write. The words I wish to use escape me, and I do not want to seem judgemental. I am terrified that my thoughts will come off as condescending and harsh, but I want to let you know that I only want the best for you.

For thousands of years, the Jewish people have been a small yet sturdy nation. Through the blood libels and the Inquisition, the pogroms and the Holocaust, we have been an unbroken people, facing our challenges head-on. But despite the many dangers we’ve faced, the Jewish people are no stranger to resilience. Amidst a world of ever-changing norms, of persecution and discrimination, we are constantly able to adapt and face our troubles with our families and greater communities to look to for support in the difficult times we have faced. In the twenty-first century, we continue to face our demons, and this one might be one of our greatest systematic threats: intermarriage and severing

the ties between generations of halachic Jewry.

You and I were no different, my friend. We grew up surrounded by a Jewish community: from youth group to synagogue to Hebrew school and everything in between. Judaism was a constant for us, no matter how involved we chose to be. But over the past few years, I know that I have become more involved than I once was, while you seem to have moved farther away. Religion no longer plays as integral a role in your life,

to you and your future children. Will you be able to feel a sense of fulfillment from another place? Will you be able to find a community that completely accepts your mixed marriage? Will you be able to live with the consequences of potentially not being able to reconcile with your family? I don’t mean to scare you with these questions, but they are all real and scary thoughts you must consider before marrying someone outside of your religion.



Where have the years gone? From childhood, to school, to the adult world, we have been there for one another. This is why it pains me so much to write this letter. For years, we dreamed about the people we each would marry: a childhood fantasy. But now, this fantasy is becoming a reality and while you may love this person, this has become a nightmare to others around you who worry about your mental and spiritual well-being.

My dear friend, I respect you, but how could I accept a decision that is responsible for dismantling our heritage? Even if your spouse is okay with celebrating some Jewish traditions and customs, you run the risk of your children or grandchildren not being halachically Jewish—something that would devastate your family and hurt them in a most profound way.

I want to make it clear that I am not telling you how to live your life. Despite the decisions you decide to

and when you began dating your significant other, your family was deeply concerned.

Will they marry out? Will their children be Jewish? These are some of the many questions they wondered. Will they practice Judaism or another religion in the home? Will they remember the three thousand plus years of history and heritage they’ve come from? Should we disown them?

While I must admit that I have similar questions myself, more importantly, I wonder what will happen

make, I will continue to love you. I will always recall our memories with a dearest fondness and I will think of you as a kindred soul. But alas, according to Jewish law, this union is prohibited and I cannot partake the celebration of those nuptials in any form.

Though I hope that you both will have a happy life together, I am afraid that it is not one I can be a part of. Sincerely,

Your friend.



## The Failure of Stern's Torah U'Mada

continued from page 1:

There is also the argument that not getting the equal number of credits to match the hours taken, makes the

**“This seems to reflect how much YU really considers its women’s Torah to be worth; in comparison to other subjects, the rate is 2/3.”**

learning in these Judaic classes “lishma”—purely for G-d. However, all the grades are averaged together to form that

six-credit combination, so each class is still focused on the grade as much as if it were worth its full credit.

The only results of CORE classes counting for two thirds of the credit are negative.

When a student knows that any Judaic class that she takes on CORE is not worth as much as any general-studies class that she takes that semester, she will not be as motivated to put her efforts into that class in order to do well. Overall, the system makes women wrinkle their noses at the thought of putting in precious time and brain power to three challenging Judaic classes, just to earn one six-credit A. They therefore settle for less stimulating Torah. They take classes that won't detain them from what will actually be on their records. This discouragement from pushing limits in Torah learning is absolutely abhorrent.

On a philosophical level, cutting down how much Torah extrinsically counts might subconsciously reduce the intrinsic respect that students have for it. Why should I care about my Judaic classes as much as my general studies, if even Yeshiva University doesn't think they matter? When students are academically trained to see Torah classes as less serious than secular ones, it will likely have an effect on their view of the worth of the subjects intuitively. In fact, many women create their general studies schedules first, then pick whichever of the easiest Judaic classes “fit into” their schedules.

When the Rav conceptualized “Torah U'Mada,” Torah came first. With the diminishment of value that the CORE system implies, Torah barely falls in the same category.

How can the system be improved, so that women's Torah learning is put back on

the pedestal which it deserves to be on?

Pick a side, YU. If you want us to consider our Torah with the same value as our Mada, make it worth the same amount of credits. And if you want us to see it as more important, either make it worth more, or make it completely lishma. This in-between status is not only confusing, but disrespectful to the educational importance of Torah. After all, we didn't sacrifice so much to be at YU, to then have our Torah be of such low status.

Maybe Stern students should be perfect. Maybe we should all realize the value of Torah without your help. But at the end of the day, most of us need our institution to make its priorities clear if we want to understand life's priorities ourselves.



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## YU's Conflict of Interest Policy: Lessons in Student Journalism

continued from page 2:

This was a job for experts.

So my next step was to find those experts; if I couldn't draw conclusions myself I would find people who could. YU has plenty of experts in finance and law, but unfortunately I found many of those experts difficult to reach. When I finally was able to make an appointment to speak with a finance professor uptown—the first person who agreed to meet with me after weeks of searching—we spoke for just five minutes before it was clear to us both that he too was not the man for the job. He told me to contact someone at Cardozo.

By then it was almost midterms of the Spring semester. I had had the policy for almost three and half months but hadn't done anything with it, still looking for some expert opinion in how to assess it. But as midterms approached and my workload began to weigh me down, I put my research on hold. I had contacted so many people about the policy to no avail and it was time consuming. I made the decision to put my school work first and put the article on hold. But my school work never lightened up and I never found the time to get back to it. Now I am finishing my time on the paper without having ever gotten to the root of that story.

My experience investigating—and not investigating—YU's conflict of interest policy, taught me a lot about the serious weaknesses and great strengths of student journalism.

One of the biggest problems with student journalism is that we are foremost, obviously, students. Unlike full-time journalists who can chase a story with all of their energy, students have a responsibility to themselves to

be successful at their studies. We aren't able to fully

**“As students of YU we are perfectly equipped for this job; we are passionate about our school and that passion drives us.”**

devote all our efforts all the time to every story, and so, sometimes, we can't do the investigative research needed to appropriately cover them.

But despite the drawback this experience taught me, I chose to end my time at The Observer with this story because I think it also shows the greatest strengths student journalists have to offer, especially at YU: our passion and ability to have a lasting impact through that passion.

Nobody cares about YU as much as its students—we have invested a considerable amount of money and our future career prospects in this institution, and we spend the majority of our days here for three to four years. As student journalists it is our job to care about our school—to care about what goes on here and share it with everyone else. As students of YU we are perfectly equipped for this job; we are passionate about our school and that passion drives us. It drives us to email the president's office fifteen times a month about a policy that you may never get to read. It drives us to expose significant problems on campus, shape student conversation with our opinions, and hold people accountable, both for what they have done right and what they have done wrong.

When it comes to news about our school, it is that passion that makes us the best source. Our passion comes from intimate knowledge of what it is like to be a student here, something a even the most skilled journalist with all the time in the world could not replicate.

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