Dear Americanists,

In case you haven’t noticed, we have been significantly expanding our activities into new and exciting areas. As we begin our fifth year as Israel’s first and only academic center exclusively dedicated to the study and research of the United States, we have the privilege of announcing several new opportunities and programs as well as an upcoming series of events and guest lectures oriented around our annual theme: Democracy and Technology.

As part of our commitment to supporting graduate student research we have made our grants available to all eligible candidates researching the U.S. in any institution of higher learning in Israel. In addition, we are now offering doctoral grants to promote early career publishing.

CSUS has recently launched a new interactive Wix-based website that offers a wide range of multimedia options, including videos of past events and podcasts by our interdisciplinary team of faculty and experts.

We are also excited to announce that our forthcoming edited volume of essays, “The Americanization of the Israeli Right,” is scheduled for publication by the end of next year. Our joint faculty-graduate student seminar, an intimate interdisciplinary forum for vibrant discussion, will expand yet again this year to incorporate faculty and students from community colleges (michlalot) all around Israel. The seminar’s annual theme is Populism.

On the international front, CSUS is enhancing its collaborative research and developing new forums to explore U.S.-Israel relations and the Jewish-American experience together with our partners from leading universities in the U.S. and Europe. You can find the full schedule of events and more details on our website and Facebook page. It’s going to be a busy year and we look forward to seeing you at our events!

As always, below is a roundup of all the latest research about the U.S. by Israel-based scholars. Enjoy!

Dr. Yoav Fromer,
Head of the Center for the Study of the United States,
Tel Aviv University, in Partnership with the Fulbright program
This article establishes the existence of an American Jewish tradition of metalinguistic thought that stretches from the mid-twentieth century to our time. It demonstrates how American Jewish thinkers’ reflections on language implied a response to the claims made on their Jewish identity by their symbolic homeland, Israel. In particular, thinkers rejected the questioning approach of Israeli intellectuals towards English as a medium for Jewish cultivation, and Israel’s fundamentally secular conception of Hebrew as a language and culture. The earlier, postwar thinkers challenged Israeli Hebraist assumptions by framing language as a ‘communicative tool’ that conveys (rather than embodies) religious identity. More recent thinkers took a different approach by suggesting that English is at present already a Jewish language, as it incorporates features based on Hebrew or Yiddish. Earlier and later metalinguistic thought implies continuity, but also a shift of emphasis, in how Jewish particularism could and should be expressed in America.

Recent studies question whether declining response rates in survey data overstate the level of polarization of Americans. At issue are the sources of declining response rates—declining contact rates, associated mostly with random polling mechanisms, or declining cooperation rates, associated with personal preferences, knowledge, and interest in politics—and their differing effects on measures of polarization. Assessing 158 surveys (2004–2018), we show that declining cooperation is the primary source of declining response rates and that it leads to survey overrepresentation of people who are more engaged in politics. Analyzing individual responses to 1,223 policy questions in those surveys, we further show that, conditional on the policy area, this survey bias overestimates or underestimates the partisan divide among Americans. Our findings question the perceived strength of mass polarization and move forward the discussion about the effect of declining survey response on generalizations from survey data.
Trump and Israel: Exploiting a Partisan Divide for Political Gains

by Amnon Cavari
Interdisciplinary Center Herzliya, the Lauder School of Government, Diplomacy and Strategy

in Israel Studies, 27.1 (Spring 2022)

During his 2016 election campaign, Donald Trump vowed to change U.S. priorities and strengthen his administration’s relationship with Israel and its government. As president, Mr. Trump carried through his campaign promises: He recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and moved the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem; he recognized Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights; he withdrew the U.S. from the Iran Nuclear Deal; he cut funding for the Palestinians; took unilateral supportive actions at the U.N. and promoted peace negotiations between Israel and Arab countries in the region. The article reviews these measures as strategic partisan tools used by Donald Trump to fulfill commitments to his base and to appropriate issues which had long been avoided as partisan. In appropriating them for his own political gains, the former president tapped into and increased the ongoing partisan divide over Israel which may well become an irreversible trend.

The Rift Between American Jews and Israel

by Eytan Gilboa and Yaeli Bloch-Elkon
Bar-Ilan University, Department of Political Studies

in The Palgrave International Handbook of Israel (2022)

This study explores the rift between American Jews and Israel that has emerged in the last 20 years. It does so via empirical research of national and regional public opinion surveys conducted among American Jews. Views of Israel were measured through attachment and caring for Israel, and attitudes toward the Israeli-Palestinian conflict were measured by sympathies for the sides and support for the establishment of a Palestinian State. The study also presents sociodemographic data and analysis. The results only partially support the “distancing hypothesis,” which says that American Jews have been increasingly distancing themselves from Israel, and they do not consider Israel any longer a significant part of their Jewish identity. Instead, the work found erosion of support for Israel, especially among young and liberal American Jews. The deep political polarization in American politics, the close relationship between Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the Republican leadership, the tilt to the left of the Democratic party, and Israeli domestic politics and relations with the Palestinians were mostly responsible for this erosion.
Public debate rages around the world as to if and when a woman has a right to access abortion services. Though abortion policy has become more permissive over time in various places, there are still many countries with severe restrictions. The variety in state abortion policies at the state and regional levels reflects the different religious, cultural, and political attitudes toward this issue. Literature on this topic engages with larger theoretical debates within the study of public policy. That includes definitions of morality policy and determinants of feminist policy. Researchers continue to search for the ideal way to compare permissiveness of abortion policy in light of the extensive variation, conditions, and caveats that exist within abortion legislation. A number of variables, including female political representation, dominant religious groups in the country, and women's movements have emerged as central correlates with permissiveness of abortion policy. The difference between de jure abortion law and de facto access also constitutes an important part of abortion policy research.
Shakespeare ‘Translated and Improved’: The Translational Politics of the American Yiddish Theater and Its Afterlife

by Danny Luzon

University of Haifa, The Department of English Language & Literature

in American Literature 94.2, (2022)

This article explores the American Yiddish theater’s creative reworkings of William Shakespeare, a practice epitomized by the presumed parodic dictum “translated and improved” (fartaytsh un farbessert). It argues that this theater’s translational politics of chutzpah strives to breach fixed literary and familial lineages by treating the high-canonical Anglo text as a porous space, open to endless cultural attachments. Through revisionary acts of intercultural exchange, the Yiddish theater and its followers envision literary inheritance as something that is not bounded by familial descent and dissent but rather is open to alternative modes of kinship. Specifically, this late nineteenth-century strategy is carried forward by authors such as Anzia Yezierska and Grace Paley, who turn to the Yiddish theater’s proclaimed improvement of Shakespeare in their multilingual English works in order to envision a radical fluidity of the American self. Writing on the periphery of US literary production, the authors studied in this article Judaize, Yiddishize, and queer Shakespearean characters, insisting on both the semantic and semiotic ways in which translations can democratize the linguistic economy of Anglo-American literature.

by Sharon Elhadad and Udi Sommer
Tel-Aviv University, School of Political Science, Government and International affairs

in Studia z Polityki Publicznej, 9.1.33, (2022)

This paper develops a unified model of policy diffusion to analyze the speed of adoption of statewide lockdown policies within a federal system during the COVID-19 pandemic. The modified unified model was built to improve our understanding of policy diffusion in contexts where existing models fall short. The authors highlight three main policy diffusion channels: regional, vertical, and internal. The paper shows the empirical test of the model across US states and finds that vertical effects, such as higher approval ratings for President Donald Trump, as well as a comparatively high proportion of COVID-19 federal funding support, bear a strong positive association with the speed of statewide lockdown adoption policies. In addition, certain internal effects are also important - higher governor approval ratings are positively associated with the speed of statewide lockdown adoption policies, as are state and local spending, democratic state governments, and population awareness of the virus. However, other internal factors, such as the stringency of statewide lockdown policies and the relative proportion of COVID-19 deaths in a state, were minimally associated with the speed of lockdown policy adoption. Surprisingly, unlike past studies, horizontal regional effects did not play a significant role in the presented analysis - the speed of adoption of lockdown policies by neighboring states bears no association with the speed of policy adoption of statewide lockdowns. Overall, the results suggest a strong influence of political factors on the speed of statewide lockdown adoption policies in the US.

The Acoustic Separation of Consumer Bankruptcy and Consumer Credit Laws

by Abigail Faust
Tel-Aviv University, Faculty of Law

in American Bankruptcy Law Journal 95, (2021)

With the Covid pandemic threatening to bring many individuals to the verge of bankruptcy, and with the introduction of a new consumer bankruptcy reform bill in Congress, now is a good time to consider the drawbacks of the current consumer bankruptcy regime. The Article argues that the principal failing of the current legal regime - the 2005 Bankruptcy Abuse Prevention and Consumer Protection Act (BAPCPA) - emanates from the underlying narrative of the legislation, which insulates consumer bankruptcy from the larger context of consumer indebtedness and consumer credit markets. This (mis)conception ->
Online Coverage of the COVID-19 Outbreak in Anglo-American Democracies: Internet News Coverage and Pandemic Politics in the USA, Canada and New Zealand

by Udi Sommer and Or Rappel-Kroyzer
Tel-Aviv University, School of Political Science, Government, and International Relations

in Journal of Information Technology & Politics 19.4, (2022)

We examine how internet media outlets in key Anglo-American democracies differed under a similar external shock: the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020. COVID-19 posed a special challenge to democracy, juxtaposing it with alternative forms of government, which may be better positioned to deal with such a crisis. The online media, as the watchdog of democracy, played a key role. As the pandemic started to spread worldwide, three democracies – the USA, Canada, and New Zealand – were of particular interest. The USA had the highest number of cases and deaths, considerably more than its neighbor to the north. NZ was the democracy that most effectively dealt with the pandemic. We comprehensively study the coverage of the outbreak on the internet website of a newspaper of record in each. Data were harvested for the universe of 27,089 articles published online between mid-February and early May on the websites of the New York Times, New Zealand Herald, and the Globe and Mail. Natural learning processing and dependency parsing are the methods used to analyze the data. We find meaningful differences between the outlets in timing, structure, and content. Compared with their US counterpart, the online watchdogs of democracy in Canada and NZ – where COVID-19 politics were far more effective – barked louder, clearer and 2 weeks earlier.

-> of the problem, I argue, has originated with the consumer creditor industry, which holds a strong interest in separating the regulation of consumer bankruptcy from that of consumer lending. The Article demonstrates that historically, the push by consumer creditors toward insulating consumer bankruptcy policy was facilitated by Congressional rules of committee jurisdiction, which assign consumer bankruptcy legislation and consumer credit legislation to different House and Senate committees. These jurisdictional rules, I argue, have generated 'acoustic separation' between committee deliberations, thereby allowing creditors to lobby for restrictions on bankruptcy access without concurrently having to concede to substantive regulation of their consumer lending practices. The historical analysis suggests that consumer bankruptcy reform should start by relaxing the acoustic separation between the Judiciary and Banking committees. Only then can Congress' deliberative procedure capture the complex, multi-faceted nature of consumer bankruptcy.
Does a state of emergency necessarily contract human behavior? In times of security crises, for instance, citizens overcome their divides. Our analysis explores the relationship between county-level partisanship in the United States during COVID-19 and mobility. We provide an original theoretical analysis to distinguish pandemic politics from politics in times of emergency as we had known them. Our framework helps reconcile previous contradictory findings about this type of emergency politics. Such a frame is needed as it has been a century since the last major global pandemic and COVID-19 may not be the last. There are five reasons to distinguish COVID-19 from previously familiar types of emergency politics: psychological, national sentiments, policy related, elite related, and time related. Our extensive mobility big data (462,115 county*days from March–August 2020) are uniquely informative about pandemic politics. In times of pandemic, people literally vote with their feet on government actions. The data are highly representative of the U.S. population. At the pandemic outbreak, our exploratory innovative analysis suggests political divides are exacerbated. Later, with mixed messages about the plague from party leadership, such exceedingly partisan patterns dissipate. They make way to less politically infused and more educationally, demographically, and economically driven behavior.

What shapes Americans’ policy preferences: partisanship or policy content? While previous studies have addressed this question, many of them focused on high-salience policies. This raises an identification challenge because the content of such policies contains party cues. The current study employs a diverse set of low-salience policies to discern the unique effects of party cues and policy content. These policies are embedded in an original conjoint experiment administered among a national U.S. sample. The design enables to assess the effects of policy content and partisan sponsorship orthogonally. Contrary to previous studies, I find that respondents are attentive to policy content on low-salience issues, and it influences their policy preferences similarly or even more than party cues, across policy domains. Moreover, the content of low-salience policies affects the support of Democrats and Republicans in a similar way. Party cues, by contrast, polarize partisans’ preferences across domains.
Recent Books

**Rally 'round the Flag: The Search for National Honor and Respect in Times of Crisis**

By Yuval Feinstein
Oxford University Press, 2022

An extensive investigation of the rally-round-the-flag phenomenon of public opinion in the United States during wars and security crises. The rally-round-the-flag phenomenon in the United States is characterized by a sudden and sharp increase in the public approval rating of the sitting US president in response to a war or security crisis. While relatively uncommon, these moments can have a serious impact on policymaking as politicians might escalate a conflict abroad or restrict civil liberties at home. What, then, are the conditions and processes through which rallies have emerged?

Yuval Feinstein is a Senior Lecturer of Sociology at the University of Haifa and a Visiting Associate Professor of Sociology at Harvard University. His research examines the ways ethnic and national identities affect people's attitudes about peace and war, ethnic minorities and other policy issues in settled and during crisis.

**Easy Money: American Puritans and the Invention of Modern Currency**

By Dror Goldberg
University of Chicago Press, 2022

Economists endlessly debate the nature of legal tender monetary systems—coins and bills issued by a government or other authority. Yet the origins of these currencies have received little attention. Dror Goldberg tells the story of modern money in North America through the Massachusetts colony during the seventeenth century. As the young settlement transitioned to self-governance and its economy grew, the need to formalize a smooth exchange emerged. Printing local money followed. Easy Money illustrates how colonists invented contemporary currency by shifting its foundation from intrinsically valuable goods—such as silver—to the taxation of the state. Goldberg traces how this structure grew into a worldwide system in which, monetarily, we are all Massachusetts. Weaving economics, law, and American history, Easy Money is a new touchstone in the story of monetary systems.

Dror Goldberg is a senior faculty member in the Department of Management and Economics at the Open University of Israel.
Chick TV: Antiheroines and Time Unbound

By Yael Levy
Syracuse University Press, 2022

Tony Soprano, Don Draper, and Walter White ushered in the era of the television antihero, with compelling narratives and complex characters. While critics and academics celebrated these characters, the antiheroines who populated television screens in the twenty-first century were pushed to the margins and dismissed as “chick TV.” In this volume, Yael Levy advances antiheroines to the forefront of television criticism, revealing the varied and subtle ways in which they perform feminist resistance. Offering a retooling of gendered media analyses, Levy finds antiheroism not only in the morally questionable cop and tormented lawyer, but also in the housewife and nurse who inhabit more stereotypical feminine roles. By analyzing Girls, Desperate Housewives, Nurse Jackie, Being Mary Jane, Grey’s Anatomy, Six Feet Under, Sister Wives, and the Real Housewives franchise, Levy explores the narrative complexities of “chick TV” and the radical feminist potential of these shows.

Yael Levy is a teaching fellow at the Tisch School of Film and Television at Tel Aviv University, where she teaches courses in television studies, race, and feminist theories. Her works have appeared in Feminist Media Studies and Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies, among others.

Fugitives: A History of Nazi Mercenaries During the Cold War

by Danny Orbach
Hurst Publishers, 2022

After the Second World War, the Allies vowed to hunt Nazi war criminals “to the ends of the earth.” Yet many slipped away—or were shielded by the West, in exchange for cooperation in the unfolding confrontation with Communism. Nazi fugitives became freelance arms traffickers, spies, and assassins, playing crucial roles in the clandestine contest between the superpowers. From posh German restaurants, smuggler-infested Yugoslav ports, and fascist holdouts in Franco’s Spain to Damascene safehouses and Egyptian country clubs, these spies created a busy network of influence and information, a uniquely combustible ingredient in the covert struggles of the postwar decades. Unearthing newly declassified revelations from Mossad and other archives, historian Danny Orbach reveals this long-forgotten arena of the Cold War, and its colourful cast of characters. Shrouded in official secrecy, clouded by myth and propaganda, the extraordinary tale of these Nazi agents has never been properly told—until now.

Danny Orbach is an associate professor in the History and Asian Studies Departments at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

By Atalia Shragai
Nebraska University Press, 2022

This book is a social and cultural history of this little-studied immigration flow. Based on extensive oral histories of these immigrants and their diverse writings, ranging from women's club cookbooks to personal letters, Atalia Shragai examines the motivations for immigration, patterns of movement, settlements, and processes of identity-making among U.S. Americans in Costa Rica from post–World War II to the late 1970s. Exploring such diverse themes as gender, nature, and material culture, this study provides a fresh perspective on inter-American relations from the point of view of ordinary U.S. emigrants and settlers. Shragai traces the formation and evolution of a wide range of identifications among U.S. expats and the varied ways they reconstructed and represented their individual and collective histories within the broader scheme of the U.S. presence in Cold War Central America.

Atalia Shragai is a lecturer of history at the Kibbutzim College of Education.

Hollywood and Israel: A History

by Tony Shaw and Giora Goodman
Columbia University Press, 2022

From Frank Sinatra's early pro-Zionist rallying to Steven Spielberg's present-day peacemaking, Hollywood has long enjoyed a “special relationship” with Israel. This book offers a groundbreaking account of this relationship, both on and off the screen. Tony Shaw and Giora Goodman investigate the many ways in which Hollywood's moguls, directors, and actors have supported or challenged Israel for more than seven decades. They explore the complex story of Israel's relationship with American Jewry and illuminate how media and soft power have shaped the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Tony Shaw is professor of contemporary history at the University of Hertfordshire.

Giora Goodman, a historian, chairs the Department of Multidisciplinary Studies at Kinneret College on the Sea of Galilee.
In Colson Whitehead's novel, The Underground Railroad (2016), the past and the present are interconnected by means of a two-way (rail)road. Whitehead takes his readers on imaginative thought-routes, as well-established literary, historical, and geographic territories veer peculiarly off-course, destabilizing and scrutinizing the known and familiar. By linking what literary critic Ramón Saldívar has called “the fantasy of the imaginary” with “the real of history,” Whitehead creates a literal and metaphorical underground railroad that takes us, as one character says, “to places we know and those we don’t.” By employing the speculative underground railroad as the central metaphor for his novel, Whitehead signals his readiness to challenge the myths surrounding it. He does so by turning to the fantastic, the imaginary and the anachronistic, raising thereby questions concerning ‘reliability’ and ‘authenticity,’ which have become pertinent in Trump's post-truth America. Using the example of Whitehead's ‘Museum of Natural Wonders,’ this chapter examines Whitehead's dialogue with P.T. Barnum, Joice Heth and the disconcerting overlap between science and popular culture, to suggest that integrity is located not in the verisimilitude of the representation of the past, but rather (following Michel Rolph Trouillot's Silencing the Past) in the nature of its encounter with the present.

Sonia Weiner is a faculty member at the English and American Studies Dept., Tel-Aviv University.
What's New at CSUS

Events, Activities, Social Media, Funding and Publishing Opportunities

- Interactive Wix-based website with original videos and podcasts
- Research grants, now open to all graduate students in Israel researching American society, politics, history, foreign relations, law and culture (past and present)
- Publishing grants for graduate students researching the U.S. in Israel (from all disciplines)
- Grants for short-term visiting scholars from the U.S.
- Joint faculty-graduate student seminar: “Populism: an Interdisciplinary Perspective.” To be held jointly with our partners at Hebrew University, Bar-Ilan University, Sakhnin College, and Kibbutzim College of Education (for a detailed schedule see our website)

Upcoming Events (2022-23)

Fall Semester:

- The American Electoral Imagination | Guest Lecture by Prof. David Henkin (University of California-Berkeley) | 7.12.22
- Hollywood and Israel | CSUS Book Forum (online) with Dr. Giora Goodman (Kinneret College) | 29.12.22
- The Jewish and Irish-American Experiences | Workshop with the University College Dublin (UCD) | 2.1.23
- Digital Diplomacy and Foreign Relations | Symposium with TAU’s Communications Department | 9.1.23
- Cultures of Customer Service | Guest lecture by Prof. Diane Negra (UCD) | 9.1.23
- Still the Age of Populism? | Guest Talk by Prof. Jan-Werner Mueller (Princeton University), CSUS Faculty Seminar | 10.1.23
- America in an Arab Mirror: Images of America in Arab Literature | Guest lecture by Prof. Kamal Abdel-Malek (Visiting Scholar, Harvard University) | 12.1.23

Spring Semester (exact dates TBA):

- Iraq War: The 20-year Anniversary | Symposium with Dayan Center | March, 2023
- The Cold War Reconsidered | CSUS Book Forum (online) with Prof. Danny Orbach (Hebrew University) and Dr. Atalia Shragai (Kibbutzim College of Education) | TBA
- Democracy, Technology and the Silicon Valley Experience | Conference with the University of Haifa | TBA
Past Events (2021-22)

CSUS events are available for viewing, anytime and anywhere, on our YouTube Channel via TAU VOD. Make sure to subscribe in order to receive notifications and updates. Here are some of the events we hosted over the past year that can be viewed:

- **The Legacy of Title IX: Academic and Activist Perspectives** | International Conference with the Israeli Olympic Committee and Wingate institute
- **The American Left and Israel** | Guest Lecture by Prof. Eric Alterman (CUNY)
- **New Directions in Jewish-American Literature** | CSUS Book Forum with Dr. Omri Asscher (Bar Ilan University) and Dr. David Hadar (Beit Berl College)
- **The Secret War Against Hate: American Resistance to White Supremacy** | Guest Lecture by Prof. Steven Ross (USC)
- **City on a Hill: A Collection of Sources from the Young American Republic** | Book Launching with Prof. Eran Shalev (University of Haifa) and Dr. Zeev Shulman (University of Haifa)
- **New Directions in U.S.-Israel Relations** | Symposium with Prof. Avi Ben Zvi (University of Haifa), Prof. David Tal (University of Sussex) and Prof. Jonathan Rynhold (Bar Ilan University)
- **Twenty Years After: The Global Impact of the September 11 Attacks** | International Conference with Dayan Center and the TAU School of Historical Studies. Guest lectures by Prof. Karen Greenberg (Fordham University) and Prof. Kanan Makiya (Brandeis University)
- **The Eighty Year Anniversary of the Pearl Harbor Attacks** | Symposium with Prof. Danny Orbach (Hebrew University), Dr. Nimrod Hagiladi (IDF Command College), and Irit Gazit (Tel Aviv University)
- **Armed Jews in the Americas** | Book Launching with Prof. Raanan Rein (Tel Aviv University)
Impact Factor: CSUS by the Numbers

38 Grant Recipients

450,000₪ Research Grants Awarded

5 Post-Doctoral Fellows

41,000 YouTube Views

42 Public Events

3,150 Event Participants

9 Community Outreach Programs (Media, Public Sector, High-School, NGOs)

160 High School Teachers and Students Engaged
If you recently published any American-related research or commentary that you would like to share, please let us know: uscenter@tauex.tau.ac.il