Scholars

Cathy Caruth teaches in the departments of English and Comparative Literature at Cornell University. She was previously the Samuel Candler Dobbs Professor of Comparative Literature and English and program chair at Emory University, and Cornell's M.H. Abrams Distinguished Visiting Professor in 2010. Dr. Caruth is a specialist in English and German romanticism; literary theory; psychoanalytic writing and trauma theory. Her publications include: Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History; Trauma: Explorations in Memory (editor, with introductions); Critical Encounters: Reference and Responsibility in Deconstructive Writing (co-editor); Psychoanalysis, Culture andTrauma (special editor); "American Imago: A Journal for Psychoanalysis, Culture and the Arts" (two issues); and Empirical Truths and Critical Fictions: Locke, Wordsworth, Kant, Freud. She presented the lecture "After the End: Psychoanalysis in the Ashes of History" at Cornell University (May 6, 2010) and was the 2010 inaugural speaker in the Clemson Lectures in Theory and Criticism (Sept. 30, 2010). Dr. Caruth also taught a special Clemson seminar on her work on the philosopher Hannah Arendt (Oct 1, 2010). The Clemson Lectures in Theory and Criticism have been made possible by support from the Humanities Advancement Board; the Department of English; Rhetorics, Communication, and Information Design (RCID) doctoral program; The Pearce Center for Professional Communication; the Department of Languages and the Department of Philosophy and Religion. "Cathy Caruth lectures on psychoanalysis, history" at the Chronicle Online (May 2010).

Yael Danieli is a clinical psychologist in private practice; victimologist; Director of the Group Project for Holocaust Survivors and their Children (which she co-founded in 1975 in the New York City area) and Founding Co-President of the International network of Holocaust and Genocide Survivors and their Friends. She has done extensive psychotherapeutic work with survivors and children of survivors on individual, family, group and community bases. Dr. Danieli has studied in depth post-war responses and attitudes toward them, and the impact these and the Holocaust had on their lives. She has lectured and published worldwide in numerous books and journals, translated into at least 17 languages on optimal care and training for this and other victim/survivor populations, and received several awards for her work, the most recent of which is the Lifetime Achievement Award of the International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies (ISTSS). In 2008 she was appointed Advisor on Victims of Terrorism for the office of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, and helped organize the first Symposium on Supporting Victims of Terrorism at the UN. She was appointed Distinguished Professor of International Psychology at the Chicago School of Professional Psychology, helping to build the first doctoral program in international psychology. She has served as consultant to the International Criminal tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and the International Criminal Court on issues related to victims and staff care, consultant to South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Rwanda government on reparations for victims, and has led ongoing Projects in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Promoting a Dialogue: "Democracy Cannot Be Built with the Hands of Broken Souls") and in northern Ireland. She authored "International responses to traumatic stress..."; "The Universal Declaration of Human Rights: Fifty years and beyond"; and "Sharing the front line and the back hills" all published for, and on behalf of, the United Nations; "International handbook of multigenerational legacies of trauma"; and "The trauma of terrorism: An international Handbook of sharing knowledge and shared care" and "On the Ground After September 11" (finalist, Best Books 2005 Award).
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Helen Epstein was born in Prague in 1947, raised in Manhattan and is now living in Massachusetts. She began her professional life as a reporter for the Jerusalem Post while she was a musicology major at Hebrew University (1967-1970). After journalism school at Columbia University, she became a freelance cultural journalist for the New York Times and the first tenured female professor of journalism at New York University. Her personal and group memoir Children of the Holocaust was published in 1979 and is widely-translated and used as a university text. Her sequel Where She Came From: A Daughter's Search for her Mother's History was published in 1997. Also widely translated, it is a journalistic memoir that incorporates family, social and cultural history of Central European Jews. She is also translated two extraordinary memoirs Under a Cruel Star by Heda Margolius Kovaly, and Acting in Terezin by Vlasta Schoenov:translator: from the Czech. Epstein’s profiles and biographies of major cultural figures such as composer/conductor Leonard Bernstein, theater producer Joe Papp and art historian Meyer Schapiro are available on Kindle as is most of her work. She lectures on family history and memoir, reviews non-fiction for major newspapers and blogs on The Arts Fuse, a cultural website based in New England. She is now working on a memoir called First Love.

Alexander (Sasha) Etkind is MAW Project Leader and Principal Investigator and Reader in Russian Literature and Cultural History in the Department of Slavonic Studies at the University of Cambridge. He holds a doctorate in Psychology from Bekhterev Institute, Leningrad and in Slavonic Literatures from the University of Helsinki. Before going to Cambridge, he taught at the European University at St. Petersburg and, as a visiting professor, at New York University and Georgetown University. He was also a resident fellow at Harvard, Princeton and Wissenschaftskolleg in Berlin. His current research interests include internal colonization in the Russian Empire, narratology from Pushkin to Nabokov and comparative studies of cultural memory. He is author of Post-Soviet Hauntology: Cultural Memory of the Soviet Terror; "Constellations. An International Journal of Critical and Democratic Theory" (16/1 (2009): 182-200); Bare Monuments to Bare Life: The Soon-to-Be-Dead in Arts and Memory; "Gulag Studies" (Volume1, 2008: 27-33); Soviet Subjectivity: Torture for the Sake of Salvation?; "Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History" (6, 1 winter 2005: 171-186); Eros of the Impossible: The History of Psychoanalysis in Russia (translated by Noah and Maria Rubens), published in Russian and translated into French, German, Swedish, Hungarian, Serbian and Bulgarian. Dr. Etkind's current group project is Memory at War, an international collaborative project investigating the cultural dynamics of the "memory wars" currently raging in Poland, Russia and Ukraine. Employing a collaborative methodology grounded in the analytical and critical practices of the humanities, the project seeks to explore how public memory of 20th century traumas mediates the variety of ways in which East European nations develop in post-socialist space. The University of Cambridge is leading this project, which will be accomplished in association with the Universities of Bergen, Helsinki, Tartu and Groningen. The project was launched in 2010 and will run for three years.
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Yael Feldman holds the Abraham I. Katsh Chair of Hebrew Culture and is Professor of Comparative Literature and Gender Studies at New York University. She has previously taught at Columbia, Yale and Princeton universities, and has published and lectured internationally. A graduate of Columbia University and its Center for Psychoanalytic Training and Research, her fields of interest include the Hebrew Bible, Modern Hebrew literature, cultural studies and psychoanalytic and gender criticism. Her research has been supported by grants and fellowships, most recently by the Herbert D. Katz Center for Advanced Judaic Studies at the University of Pennsylvania; The Hebrew University of Jerusalem and Yad Vashem International Research Institute, where she worked on the impact of historical trauma on cultural remembering and forgetting. Her latest study, Glory and Agony: Isaac’s Sacrifice and National Narrative (Stanford UP), is a probe into the transformations of the ethos and rhetoric of national sacrifice during the first Zionist century; it was a 2010 National Jewish Book Awards Finalist in the category of Scholarship. Her study, No Room of Their Own: Gender and Nation in Israeli Women’s Fiction(Columbia UP), was a National Jewish Book Awards Finalist in the category of Women Studies; the Hebrew version of this book, Lelo heder mishelahen, won the Avraham Friedman Memorial Prize for 2003. Her publications include also Modernism and Cultural Transfer: Gabriel Preil and the Tradition of Jewish Literary Bilingualism (Hebrew Union College Press), Teaching the Hebrew Bible as Literature (co-editor, MLA Publications), and numerous articles on a variety of topics, most recently, “Maertyrer oder Krieger? Die Wiedererfindung "Isaaks" als Kriegsheld im juedischen Palastina,” in Grenzgaenger der Religionskulturen. Kulturwissenschaftliche Beitrage zu Gegenwart und Geschichte der Martyrer, eds. Silvia Horsch and Martin Treml.

Karl Figlio is a professor in the Centre for Psychoanalytic Studies at the University of Essex, United Kingdom. He is also a practicing psychoanalytic psychotherapist in the Kleinian and Object Relations tradition; Full Member of the Lincoln Clinic and Centre for Psychotherapy; Senior Member of the London Centre for Psychotherapy and Associate of the British Psychoanalytical Society. With a previous background in biological sciences and the history and philosophy of science and medicine, he aims to bridge the gap between clinical psychoanalytic and social and epistemological enquiry, with an emphasis on masculinity. Publications in these areas include Psychoanalysis, Science and Masculinity; Getting to the Beginning: Historical Memory and Concrete Thinking; "Regimes of Memory" (Routledge studies in Memory and Narrative, vol. 12); "Phallic and Seminal Masculinity: a Theoretical and Clinical Confusion, International Journal of Psychoanalysis" (91(1), 2010, pp. 119-39) and "The Financial Crisis: a Psychoanalytic View of Illusion, Greed and Reparation in Masculine Phantasy" (forthcoming in New Formations). He is currently working on collective memory and nationalism, against the background of Freud’s concept of the ‘narcissism of minor differences’ and will address issues related to this work in his lectures.

Sandor Goodhart is Director of Interdisciplinary Program in Classics, former Director of Jewish Studies and faculty in the Philosophy and Literature doctoral program at Purdue University. He is the author of Sacrificing Commentary: Reading The End of Literature and Reading Stephen Sondheim. He is at work on two books: Moebian Nights: Literary Reading After Auschwitz and The Tears of Esau: Reading, Revelation, And The Prophetic. He has published articles in Diacritics; Philosophy and Literature; The Stanford Review; Modern Judaism; and Contagion: Journal of Violence, Mimesis, and Culture among others. He is a member of the editorial boards of Modern Fiction Studies, Contagion: Journal of Mimesis, Religion, And Culture, and Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies. He offers graduate courses in "Biblical Reading: The Religious, the Ethical, and the Literary; "Structuralism and Poststructuralism"; "Shakespeare" and "Greek Tragedy and Philosophy."
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Marianne Hirsch - Professor of English and Comparative Literature at Columbia University where she also has an appointment in the Institute for Research on Women and Gender. She has been a Guggenheim, ACLS, National Humanities Center, Rockefeller Foundation, and Mary Ingraham Bunting, Fellow. She served on the MLA Executive Council (1992-95); the ACLA, Advisory Board (1993-97); the Board of Supervisors of The English Institute (1997-2000); and the Executive Board of the Society for the Study of Narrative Literature, (1998-2001). She was the Editor of PMLA from 2003 to 2006 and is on the advisory boards of two new journals, Memory Studies and Contemporary Women’s Writing. Her recent publications include Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory (1997), The Familial Gaze (1999), a special issue of Signs on “Gender and Cultural Memory” (2002) and Teaching the Representation of the Holocaust (2004). Over the last few years, she has also published numerous articles on cultural memory, visuality and gender, particularly on the representation of the Second World War and the Holocaust in literature, testimony and photography. Her most recent book, co-authored with Leo Spitzer, is on the Romanian Holocaust, an area of the world that is just beginning to memorialize its lost Jewish past: is Ghosts of Home: The Afterlife of Czernowitz in Jewish Memory (2010).
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Abdul R. JanMohamed - University of California, Berkeley, Chancellor's Professor of English, writes about post-colonial fiction and theory, minority discourse, and modern African-American fiction. His work has explored the politics of literature and the nature of discourse in colonial and post-colonial cultures. Raised in Kenya, he witnessed efforts there to suppress, if not eradicate, indigenous cultures; consequently, his early work (Manichean Aesthetics: The Politics of Literature in Colonial Africa, "The Economy of Manichean Allegory: The Function of Racial Difference in Colonialist Literature," etc.) explores “the importance of accounting for... the cultural resistance of the colonized." The founding editor of the journal Cultural Critique, he is also a coeditor, with David Lloyd, of The Nature and Context of Minority Discourse. His recent publications include The Death-Bound-Subject: Richard Wright's Archaeology Of Death (Duke UP, 2005), which explores, among other things, the effects of lynching on the aporetic formation of black subjectivity in the context of slavery and Jim Crow society. Most recently, he is the editor of a forthcoming anthology, Reconsidering Social Identification: Race, Gender, Class and Caste (Routledge, India). He is currently working on a book about Black feminist neo-slave and Jim Crow narratives that focus on the “birthing” of the “death-bound-subject.”

Berel Lang - Professor of Humanities at Trinity College, visiting Professor of Philosophy and Letters at Wesleyan University. Author of Philosophical Witnessing: The Holocaust as Presence (2009), Holocaust Representation: Art Within the Limits of History and Ethics (2000), Post-Holocaust: Interpretation, Misinterpretation, and the Claims of History (2005); Heidegger’s Silence (1996), Act and Idea in the Nazi Genocide (1990) and many other works bridging philosophy, aesthetics, ethics and history. Much honored for outstanding scholarship and teaching, he held fellowships from the N.E.H., ACLS, American Philosophical Association, and the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, and is a member of the American Academy for Jewish Research. He has taught at Wesleyan, Trinity College, SUNY at Albany, the University of Colorado, and the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. Professor Lang delivered at Wesleyan the annual 2010 Philip Hallie lecture, “Primo Levi, Writer (and Memoirist).”

Lawrence L. Langer is Professor of English Emeritus at Simmons College in Boston, is the foremost scholar of the Holocaust in the field of literature and testimony. Langer's The Holocaust and the Literary Imagination(1975), his first work on the Holocaust, was followed by The Age of Atrocity: Death in Modern Literature (1978); Versions of Survival: The Holocaust and the Human Spirit(1982); Holocaust Testimonies: The Ruins of Memory (1991); Admitting the Holocaust: Collected Essays (1995); and Preempting the Holocaust. He is also editor of Art from the Ashes: A Holocaust Anthology(1995). Langer's contributions to the field are many. In Versions of Survival, he coined the term “choiceless choices” to describe the unprecedented situations of conflict that Jews found themselves in during the Holocaust. Holocaust Testimonies, based on his study of survivors' oral histories in the *Fortunoff Video Archives, won a National Book Critics Circle Award and was named one of the “Ten Best Books of 1991” by the New York Times Book Review. It was one of the first scholarly works to examine survivors' testimonies as a basis for understanding the Holocaust. A hallmark of Langer's analyses is the rejection of reading a redemptive message into study of the Holocaust, an understanding that he pursues with rigor against all attempts to soften our understanding. Initially, especially in his widely respected work The Holocaust and the Literary Imagination, Langer's preoccupation was with literature, but gradually and perceptively his focus shifted. He became consumed by the task of understanding the Holocaust. Literature became his tool; in the hands of a master, the tool soon became a club for undermining some of the simple conventions of Western society. More and more, Langer's work concentrated on memoirs and memory, telling of the assault against the individual that was at the core of
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the Shoah. More than any other student of literature, Langer insisted that the Holocaust was about atrocity. No simple meanings could be found, no reassuring sense of triumphant values, no invocation of Viktor Frankl's “will to meaning” or Terrence Des Pres “life spirit.” For Langer, there was no escape from darkness, no way to sidestep the radical challenge posed by the Holocaust. His understanding of Holocaust testimonies was another exploration of the narrative of survival. Unlike literary memoirs or diaries, the testimonies are the products of ordinary people, often without great literary or intellectual sophistication, who have lived through extraordinary events. Video testimonies are spontaneous and unrehearsed, they do not have the worked-through quality of literary creations. Often, the witnesses surprise themselves by what is recalled. Langer may have heard more of these oral histories than anyone alive, and he brings to this study decades of sensitivity toward the event and the literature. Yet, throughout the work he retains a keen ability to hear and resists the temptation to organize and categorize the material. Instead, the reader is treated to an extended essay on memory, deep memory, anguished memory, humiliated memory, tainted memory, unheroic memory (as the titles of his chapters go). What emerges is a refined understanding of the Holocaust as experienced by those who lived it, an uncovering of all levels of memory that falsify the event, that protect the individual from the full impact of this most painful experience. Like a great psychoanalyst, Langer strips away layer after layer of falsehood until the reader is forced to face the core experience – directly, faithfully, faithfully. Having opted for early retirement, he left Simmons in 1992 after more than three decades of teaching and retired to write. He has written works on the art of Samuel *Bak that combine a keen analysis of his art with an even more profound understanding of the subject matter of the art, whether it be Genesis or the shattered world in which post-Holocaust humanity dwells.

Martin Beck Matuštík was born in Czechoslovakia and is Lincoln Professor of Ethics and Religion at Arizona State University, New College of Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences at the Arizona State University West campus. He was 11 when the Soviet tanks invaded Prague. In 1969, at 12, he published a photo from the funeral of Jan Palach, a Charles University philosophy student who immolated himself in protest of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia that took place in August 1968. While a first-year student at Charles University, at 19, he signed "Charta 77," the Czechoslovak manifesto for human rights, issued in January 1977 by Vaclav Havel, Jan Patocka, and Jiri Hajek. He became a political refugee in August of that year. As a Fulbright student of Jürgen Habermas in Frankfurt a/M in 1989, he witnessed the historical November fall of the Berlin Wall and the Velvet Revolution in Czechoslovakia that lead to the election of Vaclav Havel as the first Czechoslovak President after the fall of the Iron Curtain. He lectured at Prague's Charles University as a Fulbright fellow in 1995. After earning his doctorate from Fordham University in 1991, he has been on the faculty in the Department of Philosophy at Purdue University. He published six single author books, edited two collections, and co-edited New Critical Theory, a series at Rowman and Littlefield Publishers. Among his publications are Postnational Identity: Critical Theory and Existential Philosophy in Habermas, Kierkegaard, and Havel; Specters of Liberation: Great Refusals in the New World Order; Jürgen Habermas: A Philosophical-Political Profile; and Kierkegaard in Post/Modernity, co-edited with Merold Westphal. His most recent book is Radical Evil and the Scarcity of Hope: Postsecular Meditations. His research and teaching specialties range from critical theory, Continental philosophy, literature, phenomenology and existentialism to post-Holocaust and repressive ethics, social theory, and spirituality.
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Simon J. Ortiz is an Indigenous poet and writer of Acoma Pueblo heritage who specializes in Indigenous Literature. Courses of study focus on decolonization of Indigenous people's land, culture, and community. With literary theory as a guide, research interests include cultural, social, political dynamics of Indigenous peoples of North, Central, and South America. Ortiz's publications in poetry, fiction, creative non-fiction, essay, and children's literature reflect his literary perspective across a range of his varied, active engagement and involvement in contemporary Indigenous life and literature. His publications, research, varied experience and intellectual participation is the basis of his engaging approach to the study of involvement-engagement with Indigenous literature and its place in the canon of world literatures. Ortiz is also the founder and coordinator of the Indigenous Speakers Series sponsored by ASU Department of English and American Indian Studies.

Sarah Pessin is Associate Professor of Philosophy, the Emil and Eva Hecht Chair in Judaic Studies, and the Director of the Center for Judaic Studies at the University of Denver. Sarah works on topics in Jewish and Islamic philosophy, Neoplatonisms, medieval philosophies, comparative philosophies of religion, modern Jewish philosophy, and post-Holocaust theology. She is very active in interfaith and cross-cultural bridge-building, and is interested in the nature of the sacred and its relation to inter-human engagement and response. Sarah has published and presented widely, and has recently published the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy entry on Solomon Ibn Gabirol; she is currently working on a manuscript on that medieval Neoplatonist’s “Theology of Desire”, and she has forthcoming essays on Muslim philosophical conceptions of matter; Jewish, Muslim and Christian Platonisms; Hans Jonas’s “Theology of Risk,” and an essay exploring the Levinasian elements of DU’s new Holocaust Memorial Social Action Site (forthcoming in the Memory issue of the University of Toronto’s Journal of Jewish Studies).

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Leo Spitzer is the Vernon Professor of History Emeritus at Dartmouth College and Visiting Professor of History, Columbia University. Born in La Paz, Bolivia to refugee parents who fled Nazi persecution in Austria, he now lives in the U.S., splitting his home residency between Norwich, Vermont and New York city. Trained in comparative history, he received his Bachelor of Arts degree from Brandeis University and his Masters and Doctorate from the University of Wisconsin, Madison. His interests range widely – from questions concerning emancipation and reactions to exclusion and domination in Latin America, Africa, and Central Europe, to issues of historical memory, refugeehood, and representations of trauma in photography, film and video. He is the author of Hotel Bolivia: The Culture of Memory in a Refuge from Nazism; Lives in Between: Assimilation and Marginality in Austria, Brazil and West Africa; The Creoles of Sierra Leone: Responses to Colonialism; and is co-editor with Mieke Bal and Jonathan Crewe of Acts of Memory: Cultural Recall in the Present. A former Chair of the History Department and the founding Chair of the Jewish Studies Program at Dartmouth, he was the Lucius Littauer Fellow at the National Humanities Center (1992-93) and has been the recipient of John Simon Guggenheim, Ford, Social Science Research Council, American Council of Learned Societies, Whiting, National Endowment for the Humanities, and Rockefeller/Bellagio, and Bogliasco Foundation awards and fellowships. In 1996-98, he was a National Humanities Center Distinguished Lecturer. In collaboration with Marianne Hirsch his most recent book is Ghosts of Home: The Afterlife of Czernowitz in Jewish Memory (2010). He has taught on "A History of the Jewish Immigrant Life in the United States, Latin America and Africa," "Representing the Holocaust: History, Memory and Survival," "Emancipation and Exclusion: the Jewish and Black Experiences in Europe and the Americas."