

# List College Newsletter

WINTER 2012: WHAT MAKES THE LC EXPERIENCE UNIQUE?

## The Value of Liberal Arts

By Dean Shuly Rubin Schwartz



Over the past months, several articles in the popular press have challenged the value of a liberal arts and sciences education. They question whether it's worth such an investment in time and money when the results seem so intangible. At List College, where students are earning two liberal arts degrees, the investment is even greater, but as our alumni demonstrate in innumerable ways, the benefits are numerous, long-lasting and profound.

In addition to fostering critical thinking, writing and modes of oral expression, the undergraduate education at List is dedicated to cultivating responsible Jewish citizens and leaders. During my travels to Jewish communities around the country, via email, walking in Central Park or Jerusalem, at weddings, and back at JTS at alumni events, I often encounter alumni who demonstrate these goals in myriad ways and who validate a hundredfold the value of our unique dual-degree education. I feel so lucky to hear from them about the impact List College has had on their lives, and I often wish that others could have the opportunity

to hear from them as well. Last June, Chancellor Eisen and JTS Trustees were treated to just that when they invited several alumni to share their thoughts. Other alumni followed up after the event with written reflections. With their permission, I'd like to share the perspective of a few of these alumni to give you a sense of the impact of the List College experience:

### BERNIE GOLDSTEIN JP 2002

On the surface it's hard to draw a straight line from majoring in History and Jewish Philosophy to business school and a career in corporate America. Yet when I look back it's impossible to imagine accomplishing what I have without that incredible education. What I see in retrospect is that my professors were training me to think critically, analyze and seek deeper meaning, appreciate diversity, strive intellectually, and clearly articulate a point of view. These are the core values of a liberal arts education and they have been critical skills that I leverage on a daily basis.

When I left List College I knew what it meant to be a Jewish Adult - a true bar mitzvah. That process was not easy, or neat and in some ways continues to this day. There is no doubt that my List College experience was the catalyst. It started by breaking down core beliefs to "dust and ashes" and starting fresh. It meant challenging core ideals and accepting the notion that perhaps I did not know everything there was to know about being Jewish. It was a humbling, wrenching process, but one that in retrospect made me the Jew I am today....

*see THE VALUE OF LIBERAL ARTS on page 5*

# Tales from Thamari: a Tamil Pre-School

*Ilana Cohen JP '12*

For the past two months I have been living in an “eco-city in the making” called Auroville, located in the southeastern state of Tamil Nadu, India. Over the past four decades, individuals and families from forty countries have moved to and founded this community, reforesting the arid land that was once a Tropical Dry Evergreen Forest and building a sustainable community with everything from organic farms and schools to small businesses and healing centers. The founders of the city, Sri Aurobindo and Mira Alfassa (commonly referred to here as “The Mother”) aspired to create a city of human unity where all people could come together to concentrate on evolving our consciousness to a higher level.

There’s a lot going on here to say the least, most of it fascinating and inspiring and some of it, well... interesting. After two months I am only beginning to grasp the enormity of this project and its many pros and cons. In addition to exploring Auroville and taking classes, a large part of the program includes working at a service-learning site. I have been volunteering at a pre-school run by Thamarai, an educational and cultural center located in the Tamil village of Edayanchavadi, right next to Auroville. It has certainly been a highlight of my semester to get to know the teachers, the other volunteers and, of course, the children.

At first, the initial surface differences between pre-school environments in Thamarai and in the USA overwhelmed me: the children eat fresh chickpeas for snack; they come to school with flowers in their hair every morning; banana trees growing in the playground; there is an absence of books during free-play; and the trust the teachers have in 3-and-a-half year olds to take themselves out to the yard to use the bathroom by themselves are just a few of the differences I have noticed. But eventually the daily routines became familiar, and the children began to share their favorite activities and games with me. Slowly the differences began to fade away: Tamil and North American ways of disciplining and relating to children are certainly not the same, but kids are kids whether they are in a rural village in Tamil Nadu or on the Upper West Side of Manhattan. Since the children are quite young, most of the day is devoted

to developing gross and fine motor skills in free play and structured activities, like puzzles and bead stringing. And like in pre-schools worldwide, there is “circle time”. In circle time at Thamarai 23 little kids sit on red cushions while the lead teacher reads a story or does a small English lesson with poster boards of fruits or the human body. We sing lots of songs including “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star” and Tamil rhymes about picking mangoes and making dosas, an Indian snack.

A few weeks ago we celebrated a Hindu holiday called, Saraswati Puja, a holiday that honors and praises Saraswati, the goddess of learning, knowledge, the arts and success. For this holiday we cleaned the whole building (a 100 year old traditional Tamil house) and play-yard, and the teachers performed the appropriate worship ceremony. Offerings of fresh fruit, special sweet rice, and chickpeas were made to the goddess (on a banana leaf conveniently cut from the play-yard tree) and then we all ate some as well. One of the teachers also made a special Kolam at the entrance to Thamarai. A Kolam is an intricate, geometric design made out of very fine sprinkled rice powder. Traditionally the woman of the house (or building) rises before the sun to clean the front of the

*see INDIA on page 6*



*A traditional Indian temple*

# The Joy of Knitting

*Deborah Stack JP '13*

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When I tell people that I knit, the reaction I receive is almost always the same: disbelief and confusion. “I thought knitting was just for old ladies!” my peers exclaim as they curiously examine my circular needles. The stereotype of the elderly knitter is one which my knitting friends and I have had to deal with for our entire tenure as serious knitters, on the subway, in class, or in a coffee shop, our hobby is met with strange glances and even questions, “are you making... a... scarf? For your... baby?”

Every Thursday night, a group of knitters meets on Columbia’s campus to spend time chatting, crafting, and taking a break from the intense academic schedule that pursuing two simultaneous undergraduate degrees brings. We started as a modest charity group, made up mostly of List College first-years, hoping to fulfill our service requirement by knitting hats to donate to the homeless. We have since expanded to include Rabbinical students, recent Columbia PhD graduates, Barnard students, and Columbia Engineering students. Even Columbia Engineers: one of the women who helped design the new Northwest Corner Building where we meet is part of our knitting group! We now go on field trips, we travelled together last spring to the Connecticut sheep and wool festival and representatives of our group attended the Northern New Jersey Fiber Festival and the New York Sheep and Wool Festival (the largest of its kind on the east coast) this fall.

Knitting has experienced an incredible resurgence, particularly among younger men and women in their late teens and early twenties, due to the increasing presence of the craft on the internet. Ravelry.com is an amazing tool for knitters, providing an exhaustive pattern database, social networking, and a place to document finished projects, all in one user-friendly site. Youtube is a fantastic tool to learn new techniques; simply search ‘how to knit,’ ‘make one right,’ or ‘knit continental,’ and myriad instructional videos will be at your fingertips to help make your learning process easier. Knitting has always been a “community” hobby: although it can be done alone, knitters gravitate toward each other, forming knitting circles and making an otherwise solitary craft into a social one.



*Mittens knitted by Deborah Stack*

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Last year, I had the privilege of being able to intern at Sixth and Spring publications- the producer of such magazines as *Vogue Knitting*, *Knit Simple*, and *Yarn Market News*, and the publisher of some of the best selling craft books in the country. I was honored to be a part of organizing the first ever “Vogue Knitting Live!” event, a convention with shopping, classes, fashion shows, meet-and-greets, book signings, and demonstrations. Not only was this internship only available to me because of my location in New York City, but it was certainly one of the highlights of my college experience so far; I was able to pursue two of my passions, knitting and journalism, in an office full of some of the nicest people I have ever worked with. (During staff meetings, we sat around the conference table... knitting, of course!)

Along with working at SoHo Publishing, I had the opportunity to spend a semester pursuing an independent study on the history of knitting, exploring its deep roots in European and American history, and its gendered nuances. I obtained a deeper understanding of the craft I love, and was able to

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# An Interview with Dr. Amy Kalmanofsky

*Amy Kalmanofsky is an assistant professor of Bible at JTS. She taught one of the new first-year core seminars, "On Holiness", during Fall 2011. Interview by Kay Lodge.*



*1. What is your favorite thing about teaching List College freshmen?*

It is a pleasure and a privilege to teach List freshmen. I find it moving to meet them at this stage in their lives and I enjoy helping them acclimate to life at JTS

and develop as college students. Hopefully, I will learn with many of them again and will get to experience first-hand how their thinking and identities develop. One of my greatest pleasures here at JTS is to attend the List College senior dinner where you can really see how our students thrive in this program. As I teach the freshman seminar, I often think about that dinner. I certainly don't want to accelerate time for anyone, but I look forward to seeing these students in four years and to remembering who they were and even to taking some pride in who they will become.

*2. What do the new first-year seminars offer students that was not available in past years?*

I think the first-year seminars provide JTS with the opportunity to articulate for itself and to introduce to its students what is unique about the teaching and learning at JTS. Each seminar focuses on topics that are central to Jewish tradition, combine textual study with historical perspective and scholarly criticism, and raise questions of meaning and relevance. Text, context, and meaning—it's what defines learning here at JTS. So far, I have found the planning and teaching of my seminar on holiness to be exciting, challenging, and intellectually stimulating. Because of the interdisciplinary focus of this course, I am pushing myself as a scholar beyond my discipline and learning with my students. I feel like we're in this together—learning about a topic that is at

the core of Jewish tradition and considering its meaning and relevance for the live Jewish community and for ourselves.

*3. What brought you to JTS?*

I was a customer first! I came to JTS for the learning, received my PhD in Bible from here, and have been lucky enough to stay. First as a student and now as a scholar, I seek to combine a critical with a religious perspective and be someone who talks Bible and Torah. JTS trained me as a student and now enables me as a professor to do just that. I feel lucky and grateful.

*4. If you could teach any course on any topic, what would you teach? The sky's the limit!*

I wish I was the kind of person who could say that I would teach a course on sky-diving, rap music, or Cajun cooking, but I'm just not that exciting or interesting. I do like to watch TV so maybe I would teach a course on HBO's *The Wire* or *Big Love*. Truthfully, I really love what I do and am most happy when I'm teaching Torah. So at the risk of sounding boring, I would love to teach a course that applies trauma studies to the biblical prophets. And, on a different, less somber note, I would like to teach a course that looks at the use and representation of hair and clothing in the Bible.

*5. Why are horror and the Bible such a fitting combination?*

Since so many horror movies turn to religion for inspiration, it should not be surprising to find horror in many of our most sacred texts. Horror is an effective means of grabbing attention and, more importantly, of persuasion. In my work, I argue that the Bible, particularly the prophets, employs a rhetoric of horror to scare its audience straight. What I find most interesting is to consider the unique ways in which the Bible does this. There are monsters in the Bible!

*6. What's your favorite food from the JTS Cafeteria?*

Most days I bring my lunch, but if pushed, I would say a tuna melt...or cookies. I told you, I'm just not that exciting.

# A Reflection on the First-Year Seminar: On Holiness

*Mayla Boguslav JP '15*

I am taking a first-year seminar called, "On Holiness," with by Dr. Amy Kalmanofsky. We began the semester by defining holiness for ourselves. As the semester continued, we began using the Tanakh and studying the works of various theologians, such as Mircea Eliade and Rudolph Otto, in order to further develop this concept. Over the course of the semester we are exploring concepts of sacred space, sacred time, sacred study, and sacred people. The learning in this class extends beyond the classroom: each week Dr. Kalmonofsky poses engaging questions that al-

low us to work through the material on the course's online bulletin board. This preparation enables us to discuss the ideas more in depth during class.

Dr. Kalmanofsky understands that we all come from different backgrounds and levels of Jewish learning. and she leads discussions where everyone feels free to voice different opinions. I have gotten so much out of this class: it has given me insight into the key Jewish concept of holiness and it's given me a great introduction to what it's like to study at JTS.

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## The Value of Liberal Arts

*from front page*

I think List College is in many ways a training ground for future lay people much in the way the Rabbinical School trains Rabbis. Since I graduated List College, my wife and I have always been members of the local Conservative synagogue to hear the familiar liturgy, to find a welcoming or inspiring Rabbi, and now that we have a child, because they have the best kid's service in town. List College taught me that everyone is a Jew by choice. I believe that our challenge as American Jews is to decide how we want to live our faith.

*I enjoy being an ambassador for  
"the best of both worlds."*

**SHANNA (ACKERMAN) HOCKING LC 2001**

The ability to balance has been one of the greatest strengths that I appreciate 10 years out. At every job interview, I am asked about the two degrees and how I did that. My standard response is that it will make me a productive and dedicated employee. I am also very proud to tell people that I pursued a degree in Modern Jewish Studies for my own interest and learning. I enjoy being an ambassador for the "best of both worlds" and to represent the possibilities of a successful secular career and active participation in Jewish community and synagogue life.

**BENJAMIN WALDMAN LC 2008**

I think the most direct impact that List College has had on my post-college life relates to my social groups. My friends from List, and the people with whom I have become friends through them make up my closest friends. We still hold Shabbat meals together and have begun celebrating weddings together as well. Additionally, I am still engaged with many of the communal and religious organization that I started attending while at List. I attend Chai Minyan, which many List alumni frequent, and the Old Broadway Synagogue as well...Furthermore, through internships at List, including one with LC Advisory Board member Len Wasserman, I decided to attend law school. Without a doubt, List made law school seem like a breeze, having prepared me for anything. Lastly, my education at List has enabled me to teach courses, lecture, and work as a tour guide....I took away from List, that if you put your mind to it almost anything can be accomplished.



Feedback from alumni is both gratifying and instructive as it provides the long-range perspective that spurs us to invest in our students' education and helps us continually sharpen, refine and improve the List College experience. With such accomplished, thoughtful, and responsible alumni out in the world, both the College and the community will be immeasurably enriched.

# LC Sophomore Participates in “Slut Walk”

*Maddy Richer DD’ 14*

Since coming to List College in New York City, it has been one of my goals to make the most of these four years I’m spending in the best city in the world. When I heard about Slut Walk, I knew that this would be an opportunity to really experience New York City. Slut Walk was organized in response to a Toronto police officer who said that “women should avoid dressing like sluts in order not to be victimized.” This statement perpetuated the myth of “the slut,” in which victims of sexual assault are to blame because they were “asking for it.” The purpose of Slut Walk is to raise awareness of this stereotype and tell the world that individuals have the right to make choices about what they wear *and* who touches them.

*I had the privilege of experiencing the extreme spirit of people from both genders, all sexualities, and all ages.*

People were encouraged to dress as provocatively, or as modestly, as they wanted. The event itself involved a march and a rally. I went to the march, and had the privilege of experiencing the extreme spirit of people from both genders, all sexualities, and all ages. Chants such as “Blame the system, not the victim!” and “Show me what democracy looks like!” rang through the streets as we marched. Memorable moments included getting cheers from police officers and firefighters that passed us by, and waving at tourists on a tour bus as they excitedly took pictures of the crazy New York protesters. I am so glad that I got to experience Slut Walk because it made me feel part of an important cause larger than myself while also enjoying the unique opportunities I have as a student in New York City.

# India

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house and create a Kolam, which serves as a mark of good luck for the household. Since it is traditionally made of rice flour, it also serves as a literal offering to the ants that are so abundant here in Tamil Nadu, keeping them both out of the house and spiritually happy. It takes years of practice, skill, and precision to create the Kolam, and they are quite beautiful!

Becoming part of the Thamarai community has been an integral part of my experience so far. It’s given me the chance to meet wonderful people, laugh a lot, and to learn enough about Tamil culture to see that, despite being a world unto itself, there’s a lot here that is familiar.

# Knitting

*from page 3*

work one-on-one with an amazing professor to do research in a way that I wouldn’t have been able to in any class.

Although knitting might initially seem incongruous with my age, it is my passion, and I’m not alone in practicing fiber arts as a college student. I’m looking forward to obtaining my first spinning wheel, a birthday present from my parents, and feel lucky to be in a geographical and academic environment where I am able to enrich my life with all of the events and opportunities associated with my hobby, whether it be a book signing in Brooklyn, an internship in SoHo, or a visit to one of the 15+ yarn shops in NYC. Everyone is welcome to contribute to our charity knitting efforts, even beginners are welcome, and can feel free to contact me at [destack@jtsa.edu](mailto:destack@jtsa.edu)!

**Thank you to the everyone who made donations to List College!**

We look forward to acknowledging your gifts in the spring issue. There is still time to donate to one of our many List College funds. Go to <http://www.jtsa.edu/give2list> to make your online donation.

# Alumni News

**DAVID ALMOG** (*JP '00*) and **LISA BENNETT** (*DD '02*), along with big sister Arianna, announced the birth of their son and brother, on July 28, 2011. David is currently a student in The Graduate School.

**KEITH APPLE** (*JP '01*) and Lisa Zycherman, along with big sister Dahlia, welcomed their daughter and sister, Aviva Kochava in July 2011.

**STEPHEN DAVIS** (*JP '05*) graduated from the University of Washington School of Law in May 2011. Stephen lives in St. Louis, MO and is an associate at Capes, Sokol, Goodman & Sarachan, P.C.

**REBECCA FABER** (*DD '08*) graduated from Harvard Law School in May 2011 and began working as an associate in the corporate department of Debevoise & Plimpton in October.

**JESSICA FISHER** (*JP '10*) recently moved to Chicago to become a SNAP Outreach Coordinator for the Greater Chicago Food Depository.

**ALEX HELFAND** (*JP '06*) and **ILANIT (SHTULL-LEBER) HELFAND** (*DD '07*) are moving to Israel where Alex will begin studying at the Sackler School of Medicine in Tel Aviv.

**SHANNA HOCKING** (*JP '01*) was recently promoted to Director of Major Gifts at The University of Pennsylvania Wharton School.

**LIBA KORNFELD** (*LC '00*) and **ETHAN LINDEN** (*RS '07*), along with big brothers Adin and Yona, announced the birth of their daughter and sister Liav Shir Amalya on July 28, 2011.

**Yael KRIEGER** (*JP '04*) moved to San Francisco with her husband, Joshua Ladon. Yael will be the Director of Educational Support at the Jewish High School of the Bay.

**JENNY LABENDZ** (*DD '02, GS '10*) and Zalman Newfield announced the birth of their daughter, Liba Pearl, on July 27, 2011. Liba ("heart") is named after the rabbinic dictum, "Rachmana Liba Ba'ei - God desires the heart, and Pearl is after Jenny's grandmother, Pearl Shain (z"l).

Jenny is an Adjunct Assistant Professor in the Department of Religion at Barnard College.

**RACHEL LIPSKY** (*JP '09*) and **MICHAEL BOHNEN** (*JP '10*) recently became engaged. Rachel is enrolled at Columbia University College of Dental Medicine. Michael began Columbia University School of Medicine in September. They plan to marry in November 2011 in New York.

**HILA RATZABI** (*DD '03*) recently became engaged to Jose Villegas. They moved to Philadelphia where Hila is working as an editor at the Jewish Publication Society as well doing freelance editing. They plan to marry in June 2012 at the Nassau County Museum of Art on Long Island.

**ADINA ROSEN** (*DD '11*) and **RAMI SCHWARTZER** (*JP '11, RS '16*) were married on September 16, 2011 in West Hartford, CT. Adina's father, Rabbi Jim Rosen (*RS '82*) officiated at the wedding. Rami began rabbinical school at JTS in the fall and Adina is working in the social work department at Bellevue Psychiatric Hospital.

**ANDREA SHELTON** (*JP '08*) and Joseph Chase are engaged and plan to marry June 2012 in Texas. Andrea is a first lieutenant in the US Army and works as a Platoon Leader.

**JENNIFER (ABRAMS) VEGH** (*JP '10, DS '11*) and **NAVA KOGEN** (*DD '09*), were both accepted into the Enriching LIFE Fellowships. Enriching LIFE (Lainer Interns for Education) is a one-year fellowship for a select group of alumni of the Lainer-Masa Fellowship (formerly the Lainer Israel Interns) who are beginning careers in Jewish education.

**BONNIE WOLF** (*JP '08*) recently became engaged to Frank Harris. Bonnie lives in Tucson, Az and is a SNAP Application Assistant and Community Educator at the Community Food Bank of Southern Arizona. They plan to marry in fall 2012.



*JTS administrators and students at a dinner honoring Jules Gutin, longtime director of international USY.*  
SEPTEMBER 18, TEANECK, NJ

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