Dean Jacobson on the Revitalization of Minors & Cross-Listed Courses

By Elie Lipnik

There have been many drastic changes to Yeshiva University lately, some good and some bad, and others simply confusing. Whether it be the merge between Yeshiva College and Stern College faculty, the complete renovation to the Wilf Campus Library, or the removal of First Year Seminars to the Ice Core Oaholic School, there seems to be constant chatter around the Heights of what is coming next. Currently, murmurs of particular interest are the revitalization of minors and cross-listed core/major courses.

Ever since the course surfaced, but increasingly in recent months, students became aware of cross-listed core/major courses. That is, certain courses are listed both under a core requirement and a major. For instance, the course Intro to Psychology is listed both under HBSI (Human Behavior and Social Institutions) and Psychology.

Seemingly, this is a great idea because it allows YU to offer one class for two separate and distinct requirements. However, some students are wary and apprehensive of this system for a myriad of reasons. Firstly, it allows students to circumvent the system, by allowing them to sign up for a course under the major CRN and then post-facto switch into the “full” core by way of a YU administrator. Although this may benefit that specific student, it limits the space in a class available to students within the major, who may now get closed out come registration. In addition, students in these courses who register for them as a major course generally feel that having non-major students dilutes the rigor of the course along with the in-class discussion. Students feel most upset because it appears to be yet another instance of YU negatively impacting their education due to budgetary constraints.

After relaying these issues to Yeshiva College’s new Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, Dean Jeanne Jacobson, she seemed to be acutely aware and responsive to the matter. Although she acknowledged that this setup was created in part due to YU’s precarious financial situation, she truly believes that there are positives to the current manner in which core classes are cross-listed with major courses.

Dean Jacobson firmly believes that non-major students in cross-listed courses do not takeSEE DEAN, CONT ON PAGE 5

Einstein Deal Helps Yeshiva University, Though Not Without Problems

By Yechiel Schwab

On September 10th, 2015 Yeshiva University and Montefiore Medical Health System finalized an agreement transferring operational and financial control of Einstein Medical School to Montefiore. In recent years Yeshiva has reported large and sustained budget deficits, attributing somewhere between 40 to 100 million dollars a year of those deficits to the Einstein Medical School. This deal, which originated in a June 2014 Memorandum of Understanding between the two institutions, marks a large and important step in Yeshiva’s quest for financial stability.

Medical School Budgets

Though Yeshiva sought financial benefit by separating from its medical school, many universities profit from the sources of revenue brought in by their medical schools. In recent years, some universities have even sought to merge with medical schools because of the perceived financial benefits. Inside Higher Education, in a 2012 article entitled “Get Me a Med School! Stat!”, notes this trend of universities merging with medical centers for monetary gains. “Health science centers offer several revenue streams, particularly research funding and clinical fees... Medical schools and the hospitals attached to them also provide other potential sources of revenue, such as corporate partnerships, fees, government reimbursements, and philanthropic giving.” According to the Association for American Medical Colleges (AAMC), in 2014 the average medical school earned over 700 million dollars in revenue. Among private medical schools the number shoots to 1 billion dollars in revenue.

But if medical schools bring in so much revenue, why was Einstein generating such large deficits? Because unlike almost all of these medical schools, Einstein does not own an affiliate hospital. Originally, Einstein housed and operated the Jack D. Weiler Hospital. However, in 1969, Montefiore assumed operational responsibility for this hospital. Inside Higher Education notes that a large portion of medical school revenue comes from clinical fees and hospital income. According to the AAMC, in 2014, 40% percent of revenue came from practice plans, which is revenue generated from patients treated at a medical center. An additional 18% of revenue comes from Hospital Purchased Services and Investments. This means that the average medical school earns over 400 million dollars from these two categories. In contrast, YU’s 2014 budget showed a comparatively meager 36 million dollars in patient care, and an additional 23 million dollars from all affiliation agreements.

“THOUGH THE DEAL ALTERS THE NATURE AND OVERALL STANDING OF THE UNIVERSITY, IT REPRESENTS A HUGE AND CRUCIAL STEP TOWARD FINANCIAL STABILITY.”

SEE EINSTEIN, CONT ON PAGE 3

Students Unite in Support and Prayer in Face of Terror Wave

By David Rubinstein

Yeshiva University held several events in connection to the recent surge in terror attacks in Israel. The violence started during the Sukkot break on October 1st with the murder of Etam and Naama Henkin but has extended into the resumption of the semester, allowing students to respond on campus to the events in Israel.

Arayl for the communal recitation of Psalms was called for October 12th by the Student Organization of Yeshiva, the student council responsible for religious student activities on the Wilf Campus. When the terror continued into the next day, a second rally was called for October 13th. Several leaders of the YU community led the prayers, which were held in the Glueck Beit Midrash, including President Richard Joel and Rabbi Herschel Shachter, Rosh Yeshiva. Between 300 to 400 students from across the programs of the Undergraduate Torah Studies attended each rally.

Students found the rallies to be a good way to feel connected to Jews in Israel. “It obviously can’t replace what Israelis are going through right now,” a junior in the Mazer Yeshiva Torah Studies attended each rally. Psalms have been recited at the end of each minyan in addition to the formal rallies. These recitations are based on the belief that communal prayer, in the form of reciting Psalms, is particularly appropriate in times of collective trouble.

On the night of October 13, around 70 students attended a discussion titled “Jewish Responses to Terror.” Rabbi Dr. Jacob J. Shacter, University Professor of Jewish History and Jewish Thought, led the discussion together with Rabbi Gideon Black, who survived a terror attack that killed his cousin. SOY and the Torah Activities Council, the student council responsible for religious student activities on the Wilf Campus, sponsored the event. The event was created “to provide opportunities for students to have their voices heard and their input valued,” TAC President Talia Molotsky, ’16.

Chaya Dachoh, TAC Vice President, thought the program “provided students chizuk and guidance on how to act as a nation and respond to the terror that is occurring in Israel.” Rabbi Shachter stressed the importance of coming closer to one’s neighbor and to God in the face of the attacks in Israel.

In addition to the psalms and discussion, the Shmira Project gathered much support from YU students. The project’s mission, according to its Facebook page, is to “Join together as a community to fill every hour” of the week of October 11 to 18 with Torah study. Launched by former SOY President Jacob Bernstein, ’15, the initiative was disseminated by Assistant Dean of Undergraduate Torah Studies Rabbi Ely Bacon in an email to student leaders in the YU Batei Midrash, including shirut assistants, many of whom forwarded the initiative to their shiur. “We must do everything we can to help kld Yisroel especially during these difficult times,” Rabbi Bacon wrote in the email.

In addition to the psalms and discussion, SEE UNITE, CONT ON PAGE 3
By Dani Weiss

On an average afternoon between classes, students mill about campuses, enjoying the last days of crisp autumn air before the forces of cold weather and the pressures of school necessitate indoor activities. The colors of changing leaves and the sun dipping behind the horizon of Amsterdam Avenue frame a scene of students in casual conversation, combining to form a picture of serene normalcy. An otherwise uninformed student might notice that class sizes are somewhat larger than expected, might notice the absence of certain teachers, but the scene observed at its surface could only be described as peaceful.

However, to characterize Yeshiva as an institution undergoing a peaceful time would be misleading. Years of budgetary deficits and poor financial controls have left YU with significant financial tension. Just last semester, the faculties of the Albert Einstein College of Medicine and Yeshiva College respectively passed a motion of no-confidence in President Joel, and – in response to rumors of sweeping cuts that were thought to affect the academic quality of Yeshiva College – the men’s undergraduate student council held well-attended protests, expressing deep reservations in the university’s leadership. So YU’s road to financial stability has been, and continues to be, a treacherous one. Whether the most recent victims of budgetary controls – including several faculty members, the wrestling team, and the Core requirement First Year Seminar – will significantly affect the undergraduate experience is an issue that remains to be seen; nonetheless, there is unquestionably a subversive tension ever-present in the minds of students and faculty.

The good news is that YU’s financial standing has improved considerably as of late. Between a recent agreement with Montefiore Health System which the administration insists will eliminate an annual deficit of $100 million, cross-departmental budget cuts to the tune of $30 million, and a generous donation rumored to approach a sum of $15 million, the university should at least come close to balancing the budget for the first time in recent history.

Of equal significance to balancing the budget is the installation of Banner, a financial tracking system that will enable tighter management of the university’s finances. In the absence of these controls, unexpected deficits led to a liquidity crisis in 2012 that necessitated the sale of several building in Washington Heights and taking out a line of credit to survive the short-term. The university has subsequently refocused that credit, adding to an already-heaping pile of long-term debt that now exceeds a half-billion dollars.

But it would be wrong to classify debt as inherently “bad.” In fact, given the almost ubiquitous reliance on debt in American society – 80% of homeowners owe more than 60% of the value of their home in mortgage payments[1], the cumulative national student debt amounts to more than one trillion dollars[2], and the federal government owes more than $18 trillion[3] – one might think that debt is actually a good thing, and the truth is that under the right circumstances, it is.

Organizations can finance large, costly projects such as infrastructural improvements or business expansions with the governing principle that future returns must either match or outpace the cost of debt. While it allows for immediate gratification, interest payments to service that debt come at the expense of future returns. In the absence of a sufficient profit, there can be no assurance that all House transactions were properly recorded…”[5] In 2014, not much has changed: the external audit concluded that the House has “Ineffective control over the financial reporting process” and “Ineffective control over Information Technology.”[6]

So the strong parallels between YU and the House of Representatives include a long, sustained history of budget deficits, ever-increasing mountains of debt, hefty annual interest payments, improper financial controls, and inadequate reporting systems. The difference between the two is that YU is actually doing something about it.

In contrast, the presidential debates on both sides of the aisle have virtually ignored the topic of spending cuts, favoring instead to trade meaningless jabs and propose fantastical policy agendas that completely ignore the question of how they will be paid for. Criticism could just as easily be levied at elected representatives at all levels of the government, the American people for ignoring such fundamental issues, and major media outlets for not allocating significant coverage for this issue.

Although there’s a great deal of irony to this statement, it seems that YU would make an excellent financial model for our federal government.

9/11 Memorial Event

By The Commentator Staff

On the evening before the 14th commemoration of the tragic events of 9/11/2001, students gathered in Furst Hall for a memorial run by the undergraduate student councils. The event began with the United States flag at half mast and with a moment of silence for the innocent victims and first responders who perished that day. Then, the student leaders presented a video with clips from morning news before and during the attacks, to get the largely-student audience to connect better to the events being commemorated—many were barely in grade school when the attacks took place. Dr. Karen Bacon, Dean of Undergraduate Affairs, started off with clips from morning news before and during the attacks, to get the largely-student audience to connect better to the events being commemorated—many were barely in grade school when the attacks took place. Dr. Karen Bacon, Dean of Undergraduate Affairs, started off with an email to the student body urging their attendance. “We cannot remain silent,” she wrote. “We must declare loudly and clearly: Israel, you are not alone – we stand with you!”

Despite the multiple events and ways in which Yeshiva University students have responded to the surge in violence in Israel, students felt “there is still more that we can do for our country,” as senior Daniel Gofine, a former combat soldier in the Israel Defense Forces, said. A Yeshiva College junior studying philosophy commented, “Our complete duty as Jews is still unfulfilled; we must do as much as we can to help our family in Israel.” SOY President Tuvy Miller encouraged students of both campuses “to approach our student leaders with ideas they have with how they can get involved so that as a community we can support our sisters and brothers in Israel.” He found the student response to the terror in Israel “very inspiring. It’s heartwarming to see so many people caring.”

As of press time, seven Israelis and 42 Palestinians, including alleged terrorists, have been killed since the beginning of October. Hundreds have been injured.

Overall, Yeshiva University’s response has emphasized unity and a feeling of connectedness with Jews in Israel. “YU has taken many initiatives to show our support and solidarity for the people and State of Israel,” Israel Club President Shlomo Anapolle remarked. Even among the gruesome images of violence that have been released recently, what sticks most with Mr. Anapolle are the images of Jews coming together to show strength and support, both in Israel and abroad.

UNITE, CONT FROM FRONT PAGE

The Shmira Project gathered much support from YU students. The project’s mission, according to its Facebook page, is to “Join together as a community to fill every hour” of the week of October 11 to 18 with Torah study. Launched by former SOY President Jacob Bernstein, ’15, the initiative was disseminated by Assistant Dean of Undergraduate Torah Studies Rabbi Elia Bacon in an email to student leaders in the YU Batei Midrash, including shiur assistants, many of whom forwarded the initiative to their shiur. “We must do everything we can to help klal Yisroel especially during these difficult times,” Rabbi Bacon wrote in the email.

A learning initiative was organized by the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary for October 14 in the Glueck Beit Midrash. Rosh Yeshiva Rabbi Mayer Twersky spoke about issues in Jewish law related to the current crisis and Rabbi Meir Goldwicht, Joel and Maria Finkle Visiting Israeli Rosh Yeshiva, offered inspirational insights. Dr. Rona Novick, Dean of Azielli School of Jewish Education and Administration, gave a talk entitled “Coping with the Matzav in Israel” as part of the Community Shabbat programming on October 17.

On the Beren Campus, several initiatives brought students together in response to the terror in Israel. The Israel Club organized a rally for the recitation of Psalms on October 15. Additionally, Aliza Chase, a senior majoring in biochemistry and the President of the TAC club Got Middot distributed the Hebrew names of Jewish victims injured in the recent terror attacks, encouraging students to recite Psalms for their recovery. Ms. Chase also organized a “Shemirat Halashon” initiative, in which volunteers agree to be particularly mindful of preserving positive speech for one hour. The goal is to have volunteers for every hour of the week of October 18 through 24. “We can unite the Jewish people and foster love between us,” Ms. Chase said, “through focusing on small changes we can make to be more caring individuals and improving our relationships with each other.”

Off campus, a unity rally in solidarity with Israel was held outside the Israeli Mission to the United Nations in midtown on Thursday afternoon. Aliza Abrams Konig, Director of Student Life and Jewish Service Learning, sent an email to the student body urging their attendance. “We cannot remain silent,” she wrote. “We must declare loudly and clearly: Israel, you are not alone – we stand with you!”

Of course, YU students have responded to the terror in Israel.”SOY President Tuvey Miller encouraged students of both campuses “to approach our student leaders with ideas they have with how they can get involved so that as a community we can support our sisters and brothers in Israel.” He found the student response to the terror in Israel “very inspiring. It’s heartwarming to see so many people caring.”

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Dean Jacobson on the Revitalization of Minors & Cross-Listed Courses

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away from the rigor or in-class conversation because the only courses that are cross-listed are introductory ones. And, even before the core curriculum was designed, non-major students would register for such introductory courses because they do not have any pre-requisites. Moreover, Dean Jacobson made it very clear that students attempting to maneuver their way into core courses after they register for the major CRN will not be allowed or tolerated in the future. In fact, during registration for the fall semester in the spring, e-mails from the registrar warning students such registration would not be granted “post-facto” switches and students would not be satisfying their core requirements if they registered under the major CRN.

Originally, Yeshiva planned to hire more faculty to staff the core, but obviously they were not able to do so. The core curriculum was the first major revision to YU’s general education in over 20 years. Dean Jacobson admits that there are issues with the core, but “even without the pressures from budgetary restraints, there is no question that [we] would have wanted to return and ask ourselves what problems have emerged and find solutions for them.” Next semester, things will stay, for the most part, how they currently stand. Beginning in the 2016-2017 school year, however, the core revision will be completed, with hopes that it will be even stronger than it is now and here to stay for an extended period of time.

Another area that the dean’s office hopes to revive is the culture of having a meaningful minor. As it currently stands, many students at YU do have minors and it certainly is not a requirement nor a dominant ideology of the institution. Dean Jacobson views this as a “missed opportunity,” especially because one of the goals of the core curriculum is for students to find hidden interests and pursue them. Dean Jacobson wants to see minors more as something “students want to think about” and hopefully “create a situation in which core classes can also count towards a minor requirement.” This arrangement could really allow students to develop the interest incited within them by the core and give them a secondary area of expertise when they graduate.

Dean Jacobson believes that creating minors by combining core classes with a few classes in a certain sphere of study would be extremely beneficial to students. She does not want to create another requirement; rather, she wants to create another opportunity for students to further develop their skills in a particular area, while changing the academic culture on campus to one that embraces multifaceted academic pursuits.

Of course, as always, budgetary issues are at play in the conversation, so spending money to create completely new curriculum is unlikely. Therefore, what is great about this idea is that the university already possesses all the materials and resources that would be needed. Another advantage would be that students could get creative and construct their own, unique minor, tailored to their personal specifications and interests. Additionally, it would create more camaraderie among staff, since members of different departments would have to communicate and work together to create these minors. According to Dean Jacobson, “this could only be value added to a degree and to one’s college experience.” Although these ideas have not been approved by the faculty and administration yet, they will be under discussion during the current academic year. With the hope that these updates get passed, Dean Jacobson foresees great academic achievement among students in the near future.
Finding Success: The Keys to Entrepreneurship

By Uri Shalmon

On Tuesday night, October 13th, Dr. Barry Libin has revealed how to start a business and achieve success in entrepreneurship. Libin is a successful entrepreneur, doctor, playwright, composer, and author, and there is a story behind each of his achievements.

He received his DDS and MSD from the NYU medical school, and his M.S. in Management and Policy from Stony Brook University. Dr. Libin led a periodontics and oral medicine practice in New York before deciding to pursue his dreams and aspirations in pharmacological research. He was the founder and chairman of BML Pharmaceuticals before its multi-million dollar sale, but his big break was the project he started and saw to completion, the Sustained Nano Systems Company (SNS).

The concept behind SNS is essentially implanting compressed nanoparticles that contain some kind of medication into a patient and then letting the nanoparticle pill melt away, releasing the medication slowly but surely into the patient. Now, with this genius concept, a patient need not remember to take their prescribed medication. One implant can last months, weeks, years - virtually for as long as the nanoparticles are compressed!

Dr. Libin came up with this idea like any entrepreneur would have: As he explained, an entrepreneur is constantly running over even the most mundane objective he or she has, always thinking how to capitalize and make the most out of available resources. “Entrepreneurship is an attitude,” Dr. Libin said: “Taking the smallest thing and making something bigger out of it. Everything you see and hear, store, because you will most likely end up using it.”

Between 35 to 40 students heard Dr. Libin tell his success story. Quite a few boxes of pizza and bottles of coke were served. It was a great showing and a great presentation, all thanks to TAMID, the Pre-Dental Society, and Entrepreneurship and Biotechnology Club. Co-Founder of the YU TAMID chapter (and Regional Director in NYC), Ezra Kapetansky, a senior, said, “Dr. Libin eloquently explained how entrepreneurship and innovation can come from the most unassuming places. Who knew a successful biotechnology was inspired by a melting snowman?!”

Kapetansky refers to an anecdote Dr. Libin told: one fine spring day, during the intermediate days of Passover, Dr. Libin was playing tennis with a few colleagues and was musing over whatever objective he or she has, always thinking how to capitalize and make the most out of available resources. “Entrepreneurship is an attitude,” Dr. Libin said: “Taking the smallest thing and making something bigger out of it. Everything you see and hear, store, because you will most likely end up using it.”

Dr. Libin looked at the snowman on his lawn—the man who was slowly melting away in the sun, and he realized that if he could create something that would allow the medication to “melt” more slowly into a person’s body (like the water of the snowman), there will be no need for a pill once a week or drops every day—just a one-time installment would be enough.

At that point, Dr. Libin had a goal, an intention, and a concept. The next step for any entrepreneur would be to make some tough, critical decisions. Is the idea significant and important enough to drop everything and pursue that idea? Is it worth the time to follow the idea through to completion?

A budding entrepreneur must keep in mind two concerns. First of all, the return on investment: because research takes such a long time, you must be fairly certain of the success of the product. Second, patient care; the final product must be something useful enough for someone to purchase or invest in the product.

After establishing the idea’s validity, the entrepreneur must check that no one else has come up with this idea before because the only thing protecting the idea would be a patent. Thus, entrepreneurs must make a visit to the United States Patent and Trademark Office website, hire the right patent attorney, and then form a support base and find investors.

Dr. Libin said, “Try to use other people’s money; it’s cheaper than using your own!” Finally comes the complete the product.

The FDA to approve Dr. Libin’s SNS and then the drug had to complete the test trials. After a couple years, Dr. Libin put his drug on the market. The most amazing part is that this all came from a melting snowman while the good doctor was playing tennis.

While he was waiting for his product to pass tests, receive approval and make its way to completion, Dr. Libin wrote both a musical and a book. He explained that it is important to keep busy during the waiting period for a few reasons. Because, first off, if the product doesn’t make it through to the end, the entrepreneur still comes out with something accomplished, even if it isn’t what he or she set out to do. Second, although the excitement of a new idea coming to fruition is mind-blowingly awesome, the main part of the process is simple drudgery and it’s easy to lose sight of the goal. That point is the most crucial and requires the most focus on the goal. It is important not to worry over every little thing that can go wrong as there is nothing that can be done. Third, to be a serial entrepreneur, as Dr. Libin considers himself, one must be constantly creating. Dr. Libin’s compositions are the manifestation of that entrepreneurial drive.

Dr. Libin gave a few steps on how to create something, including being clear and specific about desired accomplishments, fixing on this project every day so that it permeates the entrepreneur’s overall mental state, and knowing how far the entrepreneur is willing to go. Furthermore, Dr. Libin stressed, “Stay with what you know!” One of his biggest mistakes, he said, was going into the tech business without knowing much about it. The good news, he reassured, is that one can learn about anything and then it’s time to rock and roll!

Yeshiva University Welcomes Brand New Roller Hockey Team

By Aaron Szydlo

As many of Yeshiva University’s sports teams begin or prepare to begin their seasons, a new team has been added to the athletics department: the roller hockey team. The team, co-founded by Amir Gavarin (Syms ’17) and Avi Margulies (Syms ’17), kicked off its season with a weekend tournament in Rhode Island, and is formally recognized as a club team, not a team of the NCAA.

And they started with a bang! Playing three games back to back, the team dominated in their opening performances, beating the club team from Niagara 23-5. Next, they beat Cornell 8-1. Finally, they wrapped up their impressive performance with a 9-0 shutout against Rochester IT.

The team got its start when Gavarin and Margulies, two students who played hockey together in high school, took the initiative after hearing about a large yearning for a team. “We knew how many guys in YU were good, so we figured why not see if we could compete?” said Gavarin.

And they certainly proved they could. With their breakout performance they definitely proved this is a league they were destined to play in.

The team belongs to the National Collegiate Roller Hockey Association (NCRHA). More specifically, Yeshiva University will be playing in the Eastern Conference Roller Hockey Association (ECRHA). Coached by a Yeshiva University alum, Elyashiv Gemara, the team hopes to make more headlines going forward. Yeshiva University finds itself in a tough conference, featuring schools such as Cornell University, Yeshiva College, Vermont University, St Joseph’s, and more, but the team did not appear daunted by those names in any way.

The team has been waking up at 6:00 AM to squeeze in two-hour practices twice a week to make sure they’re ready. “It’s tough to wake up early, but the guys are really into it and we’re all planning on making the most out of this season” said forward Etan Bardash (YC ’17). “It’s a great opportunity that we’re excited to have!”

Much campus chatter has come along with the beginning of the season. “I cannot believe we have a hockey team, I hope they play well so I can watch them play,” said Daniel Shub, a sophomore.

The hockey team is fortunate to have received a donation from an unnamed donor. However, while the generous donation was greatly appreciated, the donation alone was not enough to cover all the expenses of the team. Co-founder Amir Gavarin said: “We really do need more funding though--pretty desperately.” Due to the lack of funding, the players find themselves covering many of the fees that come along with the team. The eighteen-man roster willingly pays their dues out of their love for the game. But perhaps after their remarkable start, this will become less of an issue.

The start of the new season marks an era in Yeshiva University’s history. This is the first time the school will have a roller hockey team and the future certainly looks bright for this new team.

YU TAMID chapter (and Regional Director in NYC), Ezra Kapetansky, a senior, said, “Dr. Libin eloquently explained how entrepreneurship and innovation can come from the most unassuming places. Who knew a successful biotechnology was inspired by a melting snowman?!”

Kapetansky refers to an anecdote Dr. Libin told: one fine spring day, during the intermediate days of Passover, Dr. Libin was playing tennis with a few colleagues and was musing over whatever objective he or she has, always thinking how to capitalize and make the most out of available resources. “Entrepreneurship is an attitude,” Dr. Libin said: “Taking the smallest thing and making something bigger out of it. Everything you see and hear, store, because you will most likely end up using it.”
Honors Program Marks Constitution Day with Illustration of the First Amendment

By Yishai Eisenberg

A few weeks ago, to mark Constitution Day on campus, the Jay and Jeanie Schottenstein Honors Program hosted reporter Ed Hammond of The Financial Times and Bloomberg LP to present to students on the topic of “How Reporters Protect Informants and Information.” This topic is of special interest on this day, as the First Amendment of the Constitution includes freedom of the press, making it a basic freedom in the United States of America. However, informants can often be placed in jeopardy by other sources who would prefer that the information being shared not get out.

For example, a great deal of Mr. Hammond’s speech focused on a certain businessman who was threatening reporters with hurting them for releasing bad material about him, and how this was—and could, legally, be—combatted. However, those trying to keep the information from reaching the public can also use legal weapons, as did this man. This was a great financial blow to Mr. Hammond’s paper.

Later in the talk, Mr. Hammond spoke about the trial of a different billionaire who was being prosecuted on what only the press knew to be extremely shaky claims. His paper was facing a serious dilemma: should it release the material and risk contempt of court, or keep the material, an obvious injustice to the taxpayers who funded the prosecution agencies? The paper did decide to take the risk and protect the businessman, who eventually countersued, and won. This story was very exemplary of the dilemma of freedom of the press; on the one hand, the press should ideally have the right to report anything, as long as it is true, but on the other hand, information becoming public can also be dangerous in many ways and can potentially even lead to a miscarriage of justice.

The talk was very stimulating for those attending, which included Professor Gabriel Cwilich, the director of the Honors Program, and Ms. Dina Chelst, the director of pre-law advisering. The attenders were especially intrigued by the everyday dilemmas of reporters and newspapers, and asked Mr. Hammond to elaborate on many of these. However, the interest did not end there; many also wanted to know about everyday life as a reporter, what it entailed, and the benefits. Although, as Mr. Hammond stated, many reporters, himself included, do not cover exactly what they had intended to cover when they started reporting, being a reporter always has interesting questions and aspects one may not have anticipated upon going in either.

Although Professor Cwilich could not be reached for comment, there seemed to be a consensus among the audience that this Honors Program event was very popular and a large success, and all look forward to similar events in the future.

Alcohol Awareness Training Comes to Campus

By Eitan Lipsky

If a student were to sit down and write a list of all of the things that YU stands for, he or she would likely be able to spend a few minutes composing a wide array of flowery terms that reflected the university’s essence. Some of these terms would likely relate to the idealistic merging of ancient values together with modern ones, while others would focus on the great tradition of Jewish leaders who have emerged from our quantic campus, and others might even relate to the inner network of students who look out for each other and help each other succeed. These, however, are some words that would probably not appear on that list: party school.

Last month, the YU administration sent out an email informing the student body that it had elected to begin a new alcohol awareness initiative. This initiative requires every student to complete an online course about the effects of alcohol consumption and is a necessary prerequisite in order to register for Spring 2016 classes. The course, which takes about an hour to complete, is composed of many different sections which enable students to acquire a thorough understanding of alcohol consumption’s risk factors, with much of it focused specifically on college students.

Dating back several decades, alcohol consumption and possession have been prohibited on the YU campus. This policy is enforced fairly strictly, as even at the YU Purim Mesibah (festive meal), a time at which one might think the rules would be more lax, security guards dismiss any student suspected of having consumed alcohol. According to Dean of Students, Dr. Chaim Nissel, the administration is aware, based on previously conducted research, that there are significantly fewer students at YU who consume alcohol regularly, save for kiddush on Shabbat, than in most other universities.

“The Dilemma of Freedom of the Press; On the One Hand, the Press Should Ideally Have the Right to Report Anything, As Long as It Is True, But on the Other Hand, Information Becoming Public Can Also Be Dangerous”

-- DeAN NISSEL

If all this is true, why the move towards initiating a program about alcohol awareness? “We know that drinking does occur and at times can be excessive, leading to illness and potentially dangerous situations. Most colleges have a mandatory alcohol education programs in place and we felt it was time YU did more to educate our students about alcohol safety,” said Dean Nissel. After making this assessment, Dean Nissel, together with Rabbi Kenneth Brander, Vice President for University and Community Life, secured the approval of several Roshei Yeshiva who reacted positively to the initiative.

Overall, the course is informative, interactive way to become more attuned to real facts about alcohol consumption. As to what message YU students should be looking to take from this course, Dean Nissel explained, “We selected this course specifically because it does not deliver the “alcohol is evil” message. The course does, however, educate students about the potential danger of excessive alcohol consumption and teaches them how to monitor themselves, their friends and to promote safety. These goals can be achieved by not drinking, by drinking moderately and by friends keeping an eye on each other. By completing this interactive course and sharing their own perceptions of alcohol use, they will become more aware of the effects of alcohol and learn about metabolism, minimizing high-risk drinking patterns and better decision making. The goal is really to help promote safety for all our students, while at YU and for the rest of their lives.”

The administration welcomes students to offer feedback as to how they feel about this course. Dean Nissel can be reached by email at dmisnells@yu.edu or found in Rubin Hall 106.

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Updates to Wilf Shabbat Programming

By Noam Feifel

Everyone looks forward to the weekend. YU students are particularly eager, since they consistently face the difficult task of balancing their personal lives and a demanding dual curriculum, leaving little time to just sit back and relax. The end of the week provides a much needed break to recuperate and unwind.

Shabbat, the highpoint of the weekend, is especially anticipated. YU administrators know how much students treasure Shabbat and have attempted to create an experience that makes students stay on campus and back in the Shabbat spirit right here in Washington Heights. Every Shabbat, one of YU’s esteemed Roshei Yeshiva comes to the Wilf campus to speak at meals, lead singing, give zemirot at the Friday night and Shabbat day meals are exactly what I need to make my Shabbat complete.”

Although Perlman, who lives in New Jersey, has enjoyed spending Shabbat in YU, not every “in-town” student living nearby shares that sentiment. “After being on campus all week, I would just prefer to go home and Shabbat with my family, and be able to sleep in my own bed,” said sophomore Evan Cohen. Cohen, also from New Jersey, who has yet to stay in for a Shabbat.

In addition to the aforementioned weekly Shabbat programming, the Wilf campus welcomes a new asset this fall semester. Jonathan Schwab and his wife Dr. Esty Rollhaus. Schwab, a former YU student himself, is the current Associate Director of University Housing & Residence Life on the Wilf Campus, and he and his wife are the new on-campus couple. After holding this position at the Beren Campus in Midtown, Jonathan and Esty hope to enhance Shabbat for students in a more casual way up in the Heights. “We loved our work the last couple of years at Beren, and we hope that we can bring up to some of what we created together with the students there,” said Schwab. “One of the many things we’ll be working on is expanding Shabbat programming to include more students whose needs have not yet been fully met by the existing programs, whether they are living in apartments, looking for smaller meals that feel more like home, or looking for more informal games and conversations.”

Beyond Schwab’s arrival, YU also has some novel ideas it would like to implement. Rabbi Eitan Schnall, Director of Wilf Campus Shabbat Programming, noted that “There has been discussion with administration about the possibility of holding a co-ed Shabbaton in Washington Heights in an off-campus location.” Such a Shabbaton will be the first of its kind, and would be a new change of pace from the frequent co-ed Shabbatonim held at Beren.

Perhaps the most appealing part of Shabbat at YU, though, is the impact it can have on students like Eli Profeta. Currently in his first semester at YU, Profeta didn’t always have the luxury of experiencing the more traditional Shabbat ambiance while growing up. “There is simply nothing like Shabbat for its students, when the tiring week comes to a close.

"FOR MANY SHABBAT AT YU IS LIKE AN EXTENSION OF THEIR EXPERIENCES IN YESHIVA"

Shabbat on campus. There is also an array of activities that occur over the course of the weekend including a Friday night Tisch with food and guest speakers, kiddush after Shacharit, and countless minyanim at various times to accommodate varying student preferences.

This programming appeals strongly to a large number of students, who, prior to coming to YU, spent a year abroad studying in Israel. For many, like sophomore Josh Perlman, Shabbat at YU is like an extension of his experiences in yeshiva. “Being in YU on Shabbat is being in Israel for Shabbat,” students, who, prior to coming to YU, spent a year abroad and create an environment where they are eager to take part in the Shabbat spirit right here in Washington Heights. Every Shabbat, one of YU’s esteemed Roshei Yeshiva comes to the Wilf campus to speak at meals, lead singing, give zemirot at the Friday night and Shabbat day meals are exactly what I need to make my Shabbat complete.”

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Director of Employer and Alumni Relations Jocelyn Coalter to Leave YU

By Benjamin Koslowe

Ms. Jocelyn Coalter, Director of Employer and Alumni Relations at Yeshiva University’s Career Center for a little over four years, announced by email last month that she would be leaving her position on September 25. Her new position will be as the Director of Career Services at the Staten Island Campus of St. John’s University.

When asked about why she decided to leave Yeshiva University, Coalter emphasized that she “wouldn’t necessarily call it a decision, as taking another opportunity that presented itself to me. I was actually approached regarding this new position. The position is a step up from my current role, and I will be overseeing all aspects of the office.”

Mr. Marc Goldman, the current Executive Director of Yeshiva University’s Career Center, expressed similarly that “Jocelyn’s decision was a tough one, and she really did not have any desire to leave YU or the Career Center. It was all about the new opportunity.”

“I do not think her leaving is part of any trend or theme at YU,” Profeta remarked. “I think there is simply nothing like Shabbat for its students, when the tiring week comes to a close.

"YU STUDENTS IMPRESS ME EVERY DAY WITH THEIR AMBITIONS AND DREAMS"

- JOCelyn COALTER

"YU students impress me every day with their ambitions and dreams," commented Coalter as a final message to students. "I know where I would be going to college."

"Growing up in Indianapolis and going to public school, it was hard to find that sort of culture. The moment I had my first Shabbat as a high schooler visiting YU, I knew where I would be going to college."

Heartwarming stories, like that of Profeta, lend credence to how important Shabbat really is at YU. The school has, and continues to, invest in countless resources which make the programming exceptional. Whether or not students partake in it, they must admire the school’s effort to foster a meaningful, uplifting, and relaxing Shabbat experience for its students, when the tiring week comes to a close.

“YU students impress me every day with their ambitions and dreams,” commented Coalter as a final message to students. “I wish all of you success, both for your remaining time at YU and wherever life after graduation takes you.”

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EINSTEIN, CONT FROM FRONT PAGE

YU is not the only University with a low-revenue medical school. And in terms of endowments and research grants, Einstein generates significantly above-average revenue. In documents about projected revenue for the UC Riverside Medical School, the plans optimistically predict 130 million dollars of revenue in 2015, only 50 million dollars lower than Einstein’s budget. But UC Riverside directs far less funds towards research, and in 2014 received only three million dollars in funding from the National Institutes of Health (NIH), compared to Einstein’s 158 million dollars. Even with its low budget model, Einstein could have substantially cut its research funding. Indeed, after the original Memorandum of Understanding between Montefiore and Yeshiva broke down, many suspected Yeshiva would administer these cuts in order to balance its budget. It was these fears that led to a no-confidence vote from the Einstein faculty senate. In response, when announcing the finalization of the recent deal, Yeshiva emphasized that the strengths of this deal lie in its preservation of Einstein’s vast and prestigious research endeavors.

On the list of high budget Medical Schools without a hospital, Einstein has only one companion: Harvard Medical School. While Einstein ranked 25th nationally with 158 million dollars from NIH funding, Harvard ranked 21st, with 186 million dollars. In Harvard’s reporting of its 2014 revenue, its funding sources closely resemble those of Einstein: research accounts for almost half of all revenue and endowment gains account for another quarter. Most of reported revenue comes from hospital related costs. However, stark differences exist too. Harvard receives almost 80 million dollars in “other revenue,” which includes services like continuing education and patient payments from sources of revenue that Einstein does not report. Further, Harvard’s endowment is considerably larger than Yeshiva University’s, and generates a great deal more revenue. Yeshiva’s total endowment revenues for 2014 were about eighty million dollars lower than Harvard Medical School’s share of its endowment.

Despite this greater revenue (Harvard’s revenue for its undergraduate school was over 600 million, almost equal to Yeshiva’s entire budget), Harvard still reported a 40 million dollar deficit in 2014 and in multiple preceding years. Harvard credits these deficits to dwindling NIH funding and the rising expensive costs of modern day research. Due to the size and overall wealth of Harvard, though, the University was able to sustain these deficits, with aims to balance the Medical School’s budget while maintaining its high level of research. In 2014, this option was no longer available to the comparatively small Yeshiva University.

Einstein’s Deficits

For forty years after relinquishing operational responsibility of its hospital, Einstein operated successfully without this revenue stream. In 2008, though, in a now-cliché Yeshiva University storyline, Einstein embarked on large spending expenditures, only to be met by an economic downturn and the disappoointment and attrition associated with it. The Einstein website notes that “In 2008, the College of Medicine embarked on a major expansion program that effectively doubled the size of its campus.” In the years since, magnitudes and costs of “new-research”-related centers have been built and renovated all over campus. While Yeshiva was updating and expanding the Einstein campus, and spending large sums to accomplish these goals, University revenue was decreasing in a number of areas. Einstein’s largest source of revenue comes from federal grants, specifically the NIH. After a twenty-year period during which total funding provided by the NIH tripled, funding began to stagnate in 2008 and soon began to decrease. Einstein’s other sources of revenue also decreased. Yeshiva’s endowment shrank from 1.7 billion dollars to around 1 billion dollars. The economic crisis of 2008 somewhat curtailed gifts and donations to Yeshiva University. In 2013 tax returns, Yeshiva listed some of these reasons, noting that “recurring operating losses by the University are as a result of several economic factors, including: ...” Reduced research grant funding, investments in faculty to enhance undergraduate education and medical research, investments in facilities to support the growth needs of education and medical research.” Like Harvard, Einstein reported repeated years of large budget deficits. But Einstein’s deficits did not coincide with oversights of overall university budgeting.

In 2014, Yeshiva experienced well-documented and formidable economic struggles. To balance its 100 million dollar budget deficits, it sold off valuable real estate and took out loans. This process was unsustainable in the long-term, and Yeshiva received a number of credit downgrades at the time. When Standards and Poor’s (S&P) downgraded Yeshiva to a BBB, it noted that the termination of the original agreement between Montefiore and Yeshiva “further pressures Yeshiva’s bottom line given that about 40% of the deficit was generated from Einstein in 2014 and 64% in 2013...” we are operating under the assumption that the university will maintain full control of Einstein, which we believe will prolong deficits at the consolidated entity.”

After five years of budget mistakes and irresponsibility leading to an ever-increasing and unwieldy debt, Yeshiva needed to hastily balance its budget. Due to Einstein’s responsibility for a large portion these deficits, Yeshiva was faced with a choice: either maintain the high-level research and run itself bankrupt, substantially lower the quality and quantity of Einstein’s research, or let go of Einstein and allow a hospital with its own large sources of revenue to preserve Einstein and benefit from its prestigious research. S&P noted that “A divestment of the operations of Einstein by Yeshiva or a sale of the company to a private entity will likely result in a loss of the balance of the University’s medical enterprise,” and “the authority to grant degrees (which is expected to be approved in approximately three years’ time),” and Montefiore’s statement echoes this claim. It is therefore unclear what, if any role and association, Yeshiva will have with the new entity at Einstein that time. Yeshiva did not respond to requests for comments. The exact financial details of the deal also remain unclear. S&P notes that “As a result of the transaction, $136 million in university bonds that provided financing for Einstein were defeased,” or cancelled. Additionally, “$42 million in mortgaged debt will be transferred to the new entity, as well as other liabilities associated with the New York Children’s Hospital,” so the total payment will probably increase due to interest.

While exact payment remains unclear, the deal clearly delivers great financial relief to Yeshiva. Through the annual payment plan with Montefiore, elimination of debts, and most importantly, the balanced budget this deal will hopefully help achieve, Yeshiva emerges a more healthy university. Though the deal alters the nature and overall standing of the university, it represents a huge and crucial step towards financial stability, securing Yeshiva’s continued existence while preserving its undergraduate education, which is now undeniably its core focus.

Book Review: Purity By Jonathan Franzen

By Etai Shuchatowitz

When somebody reaches a certain level of acclaim, there comes it with backlash. Almost as if people don’t want to believe that there exists a genius at the level he’s touted. Jonathan Franzen is absolutely no exception to this. In the public’s eye when in 2001 he published The Corrections, a novel sprawling many generations and multiple continents about a family in the modern age. It’s a monumental work and in my opinion with every bit of praise it received, Franzen was seen as an author to watch. After a controversy involving Oprah’s Book of the Month and many non fiction opinion pieces that portrayed him as a crotchety old man frustrated with the youth of today, he published 2010’s Freedom, another poweful look at family and idealism in the modern age. It too was met with critical acclaim and it’s fair share of hate both for him and the book. Now, in September he released Purity, another lengthy book which delves into such prevalent themes as privacy, secrets and youthful idealism.

It’s not like when I’m writing this I feel the need to defend or gush about Jonathan Franzen - there are already plenty of people way more qualified to review literature who do that for me – but, I do feel the need when reviewing Purity to stick up for the big guy who already has money, accolades and persuasion in the literary community. Not for his sake, not even for my sake, but for the sake of people who are pouring their hearts into work only for it to be met with what is, in my opinion, completely unfair and misplaced criticisms. It’s one thing to not like a book because it didn’t speak to you, or to find it too long or complicated. It’s another thing entirely to frame a whole critique on the book in an ad hominem attack on the author. So, here is my review of Purity as a critique of criticisms and defense of fiction and literature as an outlet for expression.

To talk about the plot of a Jonathan Franzen novel is hard if not impossible. The book details interesting characters and the entire lives that hide behind them. We start with a 23 year old girl named Pip whose life is in utter shambles. She has $130,000 in student debt looming over her, a very strange and complex relationship with her mother and a job she hates. Until one night she gets an opportunity to join the Sunlight Project, a

SEE FRANZEN, CONT ON PAGE 12
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To the hundreds of Yeshiva University students who form the core of our amazing staff this, and every summer. Yasher Koach on your dedication, commitment and leadership!

Thank you to the prominent leaders of the YU Community who visited us and addressed our staff & campers this summer - Your presence added so much to our program.

*We are proud to be your partner and are honored to work together with Yeshiva University in serving our community.*

President Richard Joel

Rav Menachem Penner

Rav Yaakov Glasser

Rav Mordechai Willig

Rav Baruch Simon

Rav Moshe Zvi Weinberg

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Wishing you all a *K’siva V’chasima Tova!*

Rav Judah Mischel Executive Director & Shmiel Kahn Camp Director

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FRANZEN, CONT FROM PAGE 9

WikiLeaks type organization run by the very intriguing Andreas Wolf. Thus sets off a story that involves a murder, secrets, investigative journalists and a failed marriage many years ago. Like all of Franzen’s work it spans decades and centuries and presents a picture of life as a whole. I think that makes Franzen’s writing so alluring and exciting is his characters. He is unlike anybody else I’ve ever read in how non judgmental he is of these characters and the choices they make. He presents such a rich, complex and full picture of these people over so many years that everything they do makes sense, even if you don’t like it or agree with it. He gets into their heads and comments on things that make us human. And, he does it all without pausing for breath. He’ll travel decades in one paragraph seamlessly and the whole thing slowly but surely builds to paint a full picture of all of these lives and what they mean. It’s only through this strange but thrilling exploration that larger ideas themes emerge. But, he leaves it to the reader to discover and think without providing judgments beforehand.

A simple google search for Jonathan Franzen will bring up claims of misogyny and self importance. I’ll even admit that he’s really hard to like in interviews as he so clearly thinks himself to be the greatest writer of our generation. In 2010, in correspondence with the release of Freedom, Time Magazine featured him on the cover with the headline, “Great American Novelist”. He’s also on record as disliking adopting an Iraqi orphan simply to better understand millennials. He’s annoying, pompous, arguably unfairly critical of twitter and our generation as a whole. But, none of that detracts from his writing.

It’s not the first time he’s accused of being a misogynist. It’s very easy to sit in your armchair and use a reductionist term that attacks the author and his whole work. You bring up examples of his writing that somehow prove that he’s not worth listening to. But, it’s exactly not doing this that makes Franzen so effective. He’ll have a character refer to herself as a feminist, but the term doesn’t matter because he’s showing you such a complete and holistic picture of the person that no one term could encapsulate all that the person is. His writing is just like the world: complex, intriguing and leaves the reader with a funny feeling.

Please don’t take this to mean that you have to love his books. Criticism in all its forms is valid. After all, without it, we’d never get better. I just happen to think that there’s too much of it nowadays. Too much cynicism. Too many people who are so easy to dismiss a work as “terrible” for no good reason. There are things that are in fact terrible, but I have a lot of difficulty believing that something that comes from such a pure place as a desire to tell an interesting story could possibly be as bad as people claim. I know that might be naive and overly optimistic, but I think it’s true, if not fully then at least slightly.

I’ll admit I didn’t love the ending. I found that things wrapped up a little too nicely in contrast to the 560 or so pages that preceded it. I also found many scenes to be too gratuitously graphic for reasons I didn’t understand and found unappealing. It’s a book and it’s not perfect. But, nothing is. Like any writer or college student who wants to come across as smarter and more worldly than he is, I’m going to quote David Foster Wallace who said, “Fiction is what it means to be a (expletive) human being”. Good fiction is not concrete. It’s not black and white. It’s not feminist or misogynistic. It simply is. It explores and delves and makes you think and feel and want and hate. And it’s characters are not representative of the author as a person, writer or thinker. Not. Because Jonathan Franzen is annoying, or complicated, or famous, doesn’t mean that he deserves that backlash he gets. Neither he nor his haters are intrinsically special, and neither of their voices intrinsically matter. Personally, I just happen to connect a lot more to a deep exploration than a one sentence tweet deriding him as hateful. Franzen himself says it better than I ever could when, in Freedom, he writes, “But nothing disturbs the feeling of specialness like the presence of other human beings feeling identically special.”

Franzen is showing you such a complete and holistic picture of the person that no one term could encapsulate all that the person is.

Based on interviews and surveys, we discuss current events articles and scholarly research, we discuss “current events” articles and polls. I also teach courses in statistics and research methods, as well as social psychology.

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Featured Faculty: Professor Ariel Malka

By Arthur Schoen

Professor Ariel Malka has been teaching in Yeshiva College since 2009. An alumus of the University of Rochester and Berkeley, he has conducted extensive research in various fields of social science and has published a number of fascinating findings. He teaches in the psychology department and also offers a course in YC’s Core Curriculum. Professor Malka recently was granted tenure, and in honor of this milestone The Commentator sat down (virtually) with Professor Malka to discuss his research interests.

I think a lot of people - myself included - walk into their first class with Professor Ariel Malka expecting someone with a thick Israeli accent. However, unless you hide it really well, you seem to be pretty American. Can you tell us a bit about your life story? Where are you from originally? Is there an Israeli connection there?

AM: My father is from Israel, and my mother lived in Israel for many years. My parents moved from the US in the 1970s, and I grew up in Levittown, Pennsylvania. I do have a good deal of family in Israel, but it has been quite some time since I’ve visited.

Could you tell us briefly about the different classes you offer in YU?

AM: For the last several semesters I have taught a course called “Psychology and Public Opinion”, which is both a general education (“Core Curriculum”) course and a psychology course. This course deals with theory, methodology, and findings from social scientific scholarship on the psychological origins of political attitudes. In addition to learning about scholarly research, we discuss “current events” articles and blog posts that analyze recent election and public opinion polls. I also teach a course in statistics and research methods, as well as social psychology.

What was the topic of your PhD? What else did you study in your six or so years at Berkeley? (or in undergrad at Rochester?)

AM: My research interests have really evolved over time. During graduate school I worked on research examining how goals and values relate to well-being, and also on research examining different types of achievement motivation. I started learning more about political psychology late in graduate school, but my interest in that area really developed during my postdoc. I saw on your CV that you spent around 5 years at Stanford as a Postdoctoral Scholar and a Research Affiliate. Can you tell me more about what you were working on there?

AM: During my postdoc I really delved into new topic areas and spent a lot of time reading and gaining knowledge of research on political attitudes. I began analyzing public opinion on topics such as religion and political attitudes and beliefs about global warming, and the role of social identity in public opinion. In addition I worked on a large-scale survey methodology project that tested the effectiveness of a novel internet survey platform. Based on work conducted largely during this time, I subsequently published research on when and why religiosity impacts political attitudes, the influences of partisanship and trust in scientists on beliefs about global warming, and the role of religiosity that self-identifying as “conservative” or “liberal” can lead people to adopt political attitudes merely because those attitudes are said to be ideologically appropriate.

Can you tell us about some projects that you are working on? In your opinion, what is the most important project that you are currently working on?

AM: One project that I’m working on is a large-scale cross-national study of how political attitudes tend to be structured across different societies, and why. I’m trying to understand how cultural attitudes (e.g., sexual morality, immigration) and economic attitudes (e.g., redistributive social welfare policy, industry regulation) tend to be packaged together among mass publics in different kinds of countries. One key finding here is that – when one looks at a wide range of countries that vary in development, cultural characteristics, etc. – social conservatives are often more likely to lean left economically than to lean right economically. This runs against the conventional wisdom in social psychological studies of ideology and might be countiruitive for those who focus mainly on the American political context. My collaborators and I are interested in these findings and I can tell us about the nature of right vs. left ideological conflict and how background characteristics (like some personality traits and demographics) might exert opposite ideological effects across the cultural and economic domains. Other projects that I’m working on include: a critical review of the literature on psychological differences between the political right and the left; a set of studies on European attitudes toward Israel, and how these attitudes relate to views about Jews, views about Muslims, and various background characteristics; a cross-national study of attitudes toward traditionally disadvantaged groups, such as women and religious and ethnic minorities; and studies examining the effects of question wording and question order on survey responses.

Many of our students may have seen the piece you published in the New York Times in January along with Professor Michael Inzlicht, “The Paradox of the Free-Market Liberal.” What led you to publish this work in the Times? You have published numerous articles and studies in a wide array of scholarly journals, but here you made your work available for broader public consumption. How did you decide to do that? Was there something about that topic in particular that you felt would appeal more to a broader audience?

AM: I’m generally of two minds about attempting to write for a wider lay audience. On the one hand I like the idea of contributing to a broader discourse about politics in whatever small way I’m capable. On the other hand I find it tricky to deal with the trade-off between trying to write engagingly for a lay audience but still conveying the appropriate qualifications and uncertainties that are inherent in science. For this reason, I don’t often attempt to write for a broader audience. In the case of the NY Times piece, Michael Inzlicht and I thought that a recent paper of ours (published with Christopher Soto and Yphatie Kelks) might be of general interest to readers curious about the psychological factors underlying political ideology, and that we might be able to describe our findings and their potential implications in a way that’s understandable, accurate, and relevant to current political top-
By Noam Safer

A story is told of an FTOC (first time on campus) student at YU (me, of course) who spent the nights of his first semester holed up in his room with a computer and a different movie every night. As the HBOGo list of movies lessened, this FTOC wondered if he was missing out on something. Wasn’t he supposed to be gaining more? Where was his experience of the new and unfamiliar? Wasn’t he supposed to be gaining more? Where was his exposure to different types of people and areas of interest? Where was his experience of the new and unfamiliar? Wasn’t he supposed to be gaining more? Where was his exposure to different types of people and areas of interest? Where was his experience of the new and unfamiliar?

The semester had just ended when the epiphany occurred: he wasn’t doing anything outside of the requirements of his classes. He was lacking involvement on campus. Diversity is not a word often heard at YU. After all, the YU undergraduate system is composed of students primarily from the Modern Orthodox community of the United States, most of whom having obtained similar educations from comparable institutions, creating similar experiences. Unexpected, however, is our diversity within the framework of Modern Orthodoxy, and how we choose to spend our time. There are students who support the Democratic Party and those who support Republicans. Students who see Israel as their final destination and those who never want to leave America. And, there are, of course, students whose personalities mix and match the above values and practices. Out of all this diversity of interest arises a plethora of clubs and activities that appeal to all these parts of people.

Do you like learning Torah? The Yeshiva has daily shiurim and intermittent shabbatons and fabregens with some of the top Hasidic personalities in the world. Want to learn how to present more clearly and comfortably when speaking publicly? There’s a club for that. Perhaps you enjoy playing water polo or hanging out in the hot tub and discussing important topics. Have no fear, because the YU Aquatics Society is happy to oblige your interests. Or maybe, you’d prefer to be involved in something more relevant to your major that will give your career path more direction and help you network with established professionals in the field. Almost every major has a specific club catering to the interests of those students. You never know where involvement in clubs will take you.

After the rejection of a (concede, ridiculous) club application I submitted at the beginning of last semester that was aimed at allowing my fellow club members and I to create and eat sandwiches, I sought out my YSU predeces-
or, Natan Szegedi, to dispute (half-jokingly, of course) his decision. A friendship was born that later led me to run for office, giving me the opportunity to play a leading role in enabling others to explore their interests as well as serve as the representative of the student body. Involvement on campus can lead to many positive opportunities, be it here on campus or beyond.

Whether it’s political, academic, religious or plain old fun, now is the time to broaden your horizons and get involved with clubs on campus. When else will you ever have this much exposure to so many different ideas and interests? A true college experience is created by the student acting on the opportunities presented before them. If a student spends 3 or 4 years studying with their head down, they’ll miss it.

My plea is as follows: invest in your college experience. Pay attention to your Ystuds (not an easy thing, I know). Time is scarce here in YU. Make the most of it. We all hope to graduate with a degree that leads to a job, but shouldn’t we be getting more for our tuition? The college experience can and should be much more than that. It’s time to take an active role in our education instead of simply following the educational path that has been laid out for us since birth. The author Jayme Barrett said, “Expand your horizons. Move beyond the normal and mediocre to the extraordinary. Be daring. Ride the waves of life with enthusiasm, passion, and freedom in your heart.” Broadening our interests and exposure is one of the greatest ways to learn about ourselves, our passions and our drives, and will help us lead more nuanced and enriched lives. Investment in your college experience is an essential ingredient to living a fulfilling life.

From The President’s Desk: YSU

A story is told of an FTOC (first time on campus) student at YU (me, of course) who spent the nights of his first semester holed up in his room with a computer and a different movie every night. As the HBOGo list of movies lessened, this FTOC wondered if he was missing out on something. Wasn’t he supposed to be gaining more? Where was his experience of the new and unfamiliar? Wasn’t he supposed to be gaining more? Where was his exposure to different types of people and areas of interest? Where was his experience of the new and unfamiliar? Wasn’t he supposed to be gaining more? Where was his exposure to different types of people and areas of interest? Where was his experience of the new and unfamiliar?

The semester had just ended when the epiphany occurred: he wasn’t doing anything outside of the requirements of his classes. He was lacking involvement on campus. Diversity is not a word often heard at YU. After all, the YU undergraduate system is composed of students primarily from the Modern Orthodox community of the United States, most of whom having obtained similar educations from comparable institutions, creating similar experiences. Unexpected, however, is our diversity within the framework of Modern Orthodoxy, and how we choose to spend our time. There are students who support the Democratic Party and those who support Republicans. Students who see Israel as their final destination and those who never want to leave America. And, there are, of course, students whose personalities mix and match the above values and practices. Out of all this diversity of interest arises a plethora of clubs and activities that appeal to all these parts of people.

Do you like learning Torah? The Yeshiva has daily shiurim and intermittent shabbatons and fabregens with some of the top Hasidic personalities in the world. Want to learn how to present more clearly and comfortably when speaking publicly? There’s a club for that. Perhaps you enjoy playing water polo or hanging out in the hot tub and discussing important topics. Have no fear, because the YU Aquatics Society is happy to oblige your interests. Or maybe, you’d prefer to be involved in something more relevant to your major that will give your career path more direction and help you network with established professionals in the field. Almost every major has a specific club catering to the interests of those students. You never know where involvement in clubs will take you.

After the rejection of a (concede, ridiculous) club application I submitted at the beginning of last semester that was aimed at allowing my fellow club members and I to create and eat sandwiches, I sought out my YSU predeces-
or, Natan Szegedi, to dispute (half-jokingly, of course) his decision. A friendship was born that later led me to run for office, giving me the opportunity to play a leading role in enabling others to explore their interests as well as serve as the representative of the student body. Involvement on campus can lead to many positive opportunities, be it here on campus or beyond.

Whether it’s political, academic, religious or plain old fun, now is the time to broaden your horizons and get involved with clubs on campus. When else will you ever have this much exposure to so many different ideas and interests? A true college experience is created by the student acting on the opportunities presented before them. If a student spends 3 or 4 years studying with their head down, they’ll miss it.

My plea is as follows: invest in your college experience. Pay attention to your Ystuds (not an easy thing, I know). Time is scarce here in YU. Make the most of it. We all hope to graduate with a degree that leads to a job, but shouldn’t we be getting more for our tuition? The college experience can and should be much more than that. It’s time to take an active role in our education instead of simply following the educational path that has been laid out for us since birth. The author Jayme Barrett said, “Expand your horizons. Move beyond the normal and mediocre to the extraordinary. Be daring. Ride the waves of life with enthusiasm, passion, and freedom in your heart.” Broadening our interests and exposure is one of the greatest ways to learn about ourselves, our passions and our drives, and will help us lead more nuanced and enriched lives. Investment in your college experience is an essential ingredient to living a fulfilling life.

From a club on campus please see the Student Organization web page. For questions about clubs or suggestions for our school, please email YSUPres@gmail.com

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Peace is unsettling; quiet is disquieting. We students are not supposed to question the current world, to look for an environ for discontent, for something to mutter about. Towards the end of last year, a group of student leaders took it upon themselves to compose and publicize a student petition in response to the administration’s actions. The petition was written by the helpless student body. The petition was essentially a call for transparency – the writers demanded that the administration heed the students’ collective voice when making decisions. The petition was written as a call to accountable action, successful, not necessarily in influencing administrative decisions, but in creating the impression that student government at least pretends to be responsive to its constituents.

Towards the end of the petition was a request that the university preserve its Jewish studies requirements. To justify this request, the petition stated: “For an institution built on the values of Torah u-madda, academic Jewish studies serve as the bridge between our Torah study and our academic methodologies of scholarship.” I myself have a tendency to assume that claims which involve architectural analogies and spiffy phrases such as “Torah u-madda” and “analytic methodologies of scholarship” are true, but when I inspected this one I was surprised to discover that it was faked.

If there really is a separation between our morning Torah studies and our afternoon secular classes, academic Jewish studies are certainly not the bridge linking the two. Academic Jewish studies conducted in our university classes often open with secular assumptions that are flatly rejected by our yeshiva’s yeshiva component. And even when religious assumptions are put into play in the classroom, they are defended with wimpy apologetics rather than the bold assertions of a proud ideology.

Illustrations of this sad phenomenon in the bible department have been presented before, perhaps most strongly by a fellow who published an article in Kol Hamavreter two years ago entitled “Shalom Down the Bible Department.” I argue neither for nor against the specific details of his assertion to eliminate the bible department, but his basic observation has merit. Most Bible teachers at Yeshiva University do not publicly reject divine authorship of the Torah, especially in the context of an undergraduate class, but neither do they take a seriously strong stance for the biblical account.

Students are well aware of this reality. In one bible class that I took, any allusion to the issue of authorship elicited a collective nervous chuckle from the students as if to say that we knowingly avoid this forbidden yet alluring topic – we pay lip service to the idea of a God’s providence for the Jewish people, that belief, when subjected to rigorous scholarly analysis, does not hold water. What our community lacks is a strong defense of divine authorship. Instead of proudly defending authentic Jewish principles, our academics and students are nervous, and instead of addressing the issue head on, they fear being sidelined by the larger academic community.

The phenomenon is not limited to Bible classes. In a Jewish history class of mine, the professor flatly rejected the traditional Jewish presentation of history. The Talmud and other classical sources clearly state that the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Torah, was translated by a group of rabbis selected by King Ptolemy. Each rabbi was placed in a separate room, but God miraculously aligned their translations, with the stunning result that each rabbi composed the exact same translation. This story has traditionally been taken as evidence of God’s providence for the Jewish people and his habit of intervening on their behalf when necessary. But apparently more comfortable with the modern scholarly consensus than with the traditional account of God’s involvement, my professor adopted the apparently more comfortable with the modern scholarly consensus than with the traditional account of God’s involvement, my professor adopted the apparently consistent with and deeply informed by church doctrine. Are we modern orthodox Jews too modern for the biblical view of history? Perhaps, but it is not my goal here to argue for the traditional view. My much more modest point is simply that a major rift separates our traditional Torah studies in the morning from our secular studies requirements in the afternoon. If there is anyod, and if this is a real divide, then it is a very congruous one.

The state of our academic Jewish studies is a symptom of a larger problem with modern orthodoxy. Our movement is not starved for intellectuals. We produce great Talmudists, of a larger problem with modern orthodoxy. Our movement is not starved for intellectuals. We produce great Talmudists, of a larger problem with modern orthodoxy. Our movement is not starved for intellectuals. We produce great Talmudists, historians, philosophers, and bible professors, but they rarely try to bridge the gap between their academic discipline and their faith. By Doron Levine

Regarding The Building Of Bridges

“Even WHEN RELIGIOUS ASSUMPTIONS ARE PUT INTO PLAY IN THE CLASSROOM, THEY ARE DEFENDED WITH WIMPY APOLOGETICS RATHER THAN THE BOLD ASSERTIONS OF A PROUD IDEOLOGY.”

“Whenever I mention the traditional Jewish view of history, they do just that – they mention the traditional view. The students, including some of the most secular members of our student body, depend on each other for that perspective as if it were written in an objective third-person perspective, not from the perspective of an insider. It is as if this approach is strange and foreign to us. In some Jewish history classes, professors spend large chunks of class time trying to demonstrate that ancient texts which adopt the traditional view are biased and therefore deserve to be approached with the hermeneutics of suspicion. As far as I am concerned, the traditional view is a neutral, common event, like a marriage that is a source of events as divine retribution and they do not present history as a linear progression towards the ultimate redemption. Even as I string together these words, I’m sure that many of my readers will bristle at the suggestion that history should be viewed this way. But why? Christian historians such as Christopher Dawson have developed serious historical narratives that are consistent with and deeply informed by church doctrine. Are we modern orthodox Jews too modern for the biblical view of history? Perhaps, but it is not my goal here to argue for the traditional view. My much more modest point is simply that a major rift separates our traditional Torah studies in the morning from our secular studies requirements in the afternoon. If there is anyod, and if this is a real divide, then it is a very congruous one.

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By Ari Tepler

Just over a year ago, I attended an event in the US Capitol; a discussion between two highly esteemed former congressmen – Rush Holt, a Democrat from NJ, and George Nethercutt, a Republican from Washington State – on the topic of civic engagement. They specifically addressed the American public’s participation, or lack thereof, in the political process and involvement in issues that affect the country. I walked into this event with the misguided belief that college students in today’s society, with far greater access to a quality education and to political news through new avenues of media, are more attuned to political issues and to the way our government functions. Unfortunately, this discussion, coupled with my first year at Yeshiva University proved me very wrong. While participation in the political process among the general public is declining, the congressmen emphasized that this decline is most pronounced among students, the future of this country.

On the one hand, it was truly a breath of fresh air to observe that congressmen were perfectly at home discussing these issues, all the while emphasizing the importance of educating the American public. Our government is designed to serve the people, and it is our duty as students to become involved politically and to help educate the American public. One project conducted by the foundation was a video interview with a random sample of students testing them on basic civics knowledge. It actually is quite comedic to see how many students cannot name the Vice President, let alone the (former) President. One can name more than one even though each of our fifty states has two elected senators. This message they jointly conveyed to the audience was disappointing and, quite honestly, a bit frightening. As a country, our citizenship in our government is deteriorating and basic civics education is stalemating.

By Joey Chessir

Much has been made of Donald Trump’s surprising success in the polls concerning the 2016 Republican nominations. Despite making a number of highly controversial statements, Trump has risen to the top of the Republican polls, even overtaking political veterans such as Florida Governor Jeb Bush, Florida Senator Marco Rubio, and New Jersey Governor Chris Christie. Understandably, many, including Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker, are worried that if Trump succeeds in attaining the presidency, he will run the country with the same ruthlessness and impracticality exhibited when making some of his outlandish, derogatory statements about women and minorities. These statements include calling Mexican immigrants “rapists” in a speech in June, saying Fox News reporter Megyn Kelly “had blood coming out of wherever” after Kelly questioned him during the first GOP debate, tweeting in 2012 that Huffington Post founder Arianna Huffington was “unattractive inside and out” while engaging in a feud with Huffington’s publication, and saying in a campaign interview that German model Heidi Klum is “no longer a 10”. While it remains comforting that Trump is devoted to tackling such important topics, there is no denying that Trump has absolutely zero regard for speaking appropriately and respectfully towards people who either challenge or disagree with him. Many essays could be written about why a man who feels the need to belittle those who disagree with him (or anyone else) should never be the president of United States, but in truth, the problem of a potential nomination for Donald Trump is much greater than his hostile personality. The biggest problem with Donald Trump getting nominated is that from a practical and technical standpoint, he has said almost nothing about what he would do if he were elected president.

Trump, like many other candidates, has relied on blanket statements and unclear generalities in describing his plans if he is elected to office. In truth, it’s almost a guessing game as to what his policies are towards issues that are actually important in American politics, such as healthcare, the crisis in Syria, (about which he has actually stated outright “I don’t want people to know what my plan is” – at least that doesn’t sound suspicious), gun control, and global terrorism (about which he was unable to identify several key figures when questioned by journalist Hugh Hewitt). Additionally, despite his financial background, Trump has failed to actually share his strategies for fostering economic growth in America, instead saying things like “I will be the greatest jobs president God ever created” (whatever that means) and “I beat China all the time”. In not being either knowledgeable or upfront about these topics, or both, Trump is showcasing a trait that many people fail to criticize him for: incompetence. Trump has attained his popularity by saying a wide variety of outrageous statements, none of which have any practicality for a politician, let alone the president. Trump has attained his popularity by saying a wide variety of outrageous statements, none of which have any practicality for a politician, let alone the president.

By Mark Elberthal

As students, we represent the future of the American public and we have to reignite the unique American spirit which favors great strides in political participation. One project conducted by the foundation was a video interview with a random sample of students testing them on basic civics knowledge. It actually is quite comedic to see how many students cannot name the Vice President, let alone the (former) President. One can name more than one even though each of our fifty states has two elected senators. This message they jointly conveyed to the audience was disappointing and, quite honestly, a bit frightening. As a country, our citizenship in our government is deteriorating and basic civics education is stalemating.

How Not to Choose a President

Students and Politics: In the Same Sentence?
Suicide and the California Bill: A Jewish Perspective

By Shmuel Reichman

Just a few weeks ago, Governor Jerry Brown signed a bill legalizing assisted suicide in the state of California. In other words, doctors are now allowed to prescribe medication to patients, knowing full well that the patient will use the medication to overdose, and commit suicide. This issue has created a stir in the secular world, and has actually been debated for decades. Secular society as a whole focuses largely on the concept of personal “rights.” This focal point creates a highly autonomous attitude, in which every person is simply worried about him or herself. The question becomes, “What can the world do for me,” instead of, “What can I do for the world?”

It is therefore not surprising to see such a powerful claim: that people have “the right” to end their own lives if they so desire to do so. After all, every person has the “right” of choice! And voters will have to deal with any number of complex issues in any presidential election of the United States be little more than a matter of “What candidate do I vote for?” as opposed to thinking about what we “want”, we ask: “What can we do?”

Having firmly established this fundamental principle, the first thing one must ask is: What is it the Jewish perspective regarding the issue of suicide?

The first set of traditions in this world, and the one that most people have to think about with suicide, is the prohibition of suicide. Based on our previous discussion, we first need to establish whether or not there is in fact any prohibition at all to commit suicide. Perhaps we are actually in control of our own lives. If this is true, then it wouldn’t seem logical to tell you that the reason they became the person they are the greatest gifts one can possibly imagine. So how can one even think of throwing that away?”

As opposed to thinking about what we “want”, we ask: “What does God say about this issue?” As opposed to thinking about what we “want”, we ask: “What can we “do”?

Growing muscle is a classic example of the idea of “throwing that away.” We need to use the saying “throwing that away” for the same reason. If we allow each individual to decide how to live their life; and more importantly, whether or not to live at all. For example, just like the owner of a car can decide that the car is a nuisance, and is justified in discarding it, so, one should be allowed to decide that his life is more cumbersome than enjoyable, and to seek a way of ending his life. This assumption however is argued upon by many. Many infer from the Rav (Hilchos Rotzeach 1:4) that we are not the owners of our own lives. The Radvaz (Sanhedrin 18:6) states explicitly that we are not owners of our bodies or lives, and most poskim quote this Rambam.

This is the case, then we need to rethink this issue. If our body really belongs to God, then who are we to decide to dis-continue it? Could it be that we might look like we are doing something, but guard it for a few weeks. You also told him that he could use it as he pleases in the interim. Three weeks later, when you come back to pick up the car, he tells you that he apologizes, but he is so addicted to you that he can't really enjoy the way the car rode him. He gave it away. This man is clearly a thief.

It is possible, however, that he is committing suicide any different? God granted each of us a body as a gift. We were put in this world on a mission to become the person who we can possibly be.

We were given certain abilities and strengths, and given the opportunity to use those abilities to create ourselves. Furthermore, each moment in this world is of infinite value. So much so, that we are even allowed to violate Shabbos to save chayei sha’ah - as little as a few minutes of life. Each moment is filled with the infinite potential of becoming greater. Each day you can become more than you were the day before. God has given each of us the most precious gift imaginable! So how can one even think of throwing that away?

The commentaries discuss how to categorize the apparent prohibition of suicide. Based on our previous discussion, it shouldn’t be surprising that many (Pesikta De’Rav Kahana, Beis Meir, and perhaps the Rambam as well) hold that suicide is in fact treizcha (murder). The logic is quite simple. Just as everyone has the “right” to commit murder to another person, since you don’t own your body either. Others consider suicide to be a lesser prohibition, perhaps of chavalah (wounding).

It is essential to understand that there are exceptional cases where suicide may be permissible. There is a Halachic debate whether someone is allowed to commit suicide in order to prevent himself from converted to Christianity. It is also important to understand that suicide is not the only way people choose to end their own lives when they are captured, in order to prevent themselves from revealing important and dangerous information while being tortured. While there are several other issues that require further discussion, the general consensus is that suicide is fundamentally permissible. It is only in the most extenuating circumstances that an action with such severe implications would be permitted.

That being said, there is a much deeper idea here which merits our attention. The core of our issue is that people see their challenges and ordeals as a burden, which they cannot bear. While it is true that many of the cases of suicide involve people who are near death, or terminally ill, there are several other issues that are also associated with suicide. For example, someone who refuses to go through the pain or suffering they are experiencing. They therefore decide that it would be better to die now, rather than live through such a painful process. Suicide therefore becomes a true purpose of the challenges we face in life. If you would ask any of the greatest people you admire, they would tell you that the reason they became the person they are today is because of the challenges they faced in the process.

Not only do those who have faced the most challenges, but those who have grown to face the most challenges and ordeals as an opportunity instead of a burden, their life will never be the same.

While an all-encompassing Halachic ruling is beyond the scope of this article, a general point must be made. Whenever secular law clashes with Jewish law regarding the permissibility of an act, Jewish law takes precedence. Therefore, even if secular law seems to grant an individual the right to take his own life, a Jew is held accountable to a higher standard. Examining such controversial issues has tremendous value, as they compel us to grapple with different important values, and clarify what the Jewish perspective is. When all is said and done, we must realize that our way of life comes from the Torah, has always come from the Torah, and will continue to come from the Torah.

Opinions

Monday, October 19, 2015 - 6 Shvat 5776

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PRESIDENT, CONT FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

nearly as bad as Trump’s blatant offensiveness, they still fail to actually provide insight into what these politicians will actually attempt if they are elected, which is what, at the end of the day, will define their presidency. They may make vague statements about what they hope to achieve in office and putting focus on less relevant aspects of their lives, these politicians are creating an environment where the public is essentially voting for whichever candidate they think will seem the most as a person, which is ultimately the wrong reason to choose a President.

Many people may dislike Trump because of his remarks, but that’s not why he shouldn’t be the president. Trump shouldn’t be president because that’s the campaign bullying strategy he has yet to prove he knows a single thing about politics, what the president actually has to deal with on a day-to-day basis. Other candidates, like Bush or Rubio, who actually have successful backgrounds in politics, should be open and up-front about what they will actually plan to do if they are elected, because we as citizens will be voting for them on the basis of what they will do, and not merely who they are. It’s been a well-known practice in the past, it is simply unacceptable that the presidential election of the United States be little more than a popularity contest, where the candidate who gets the most votes wins. The President of the United States will have to deal with any number of complex issues in any area of politics. Whether or not the President is liked by the public has little to do with actually dealing with those issues effectively in terms of actual political actions, because there is much more to politics than simply getting elected. There is simply no way of knowing who the right candidate is until all of the candidates become open about what their plans are if they attain the presidency. Until that point, the only thing we’ll know about a candidate like Texas Senator Ted Cruz is that “If you’re looking for someone to go to Washington, to go along to get along, to agree with the career politicians in both parties who get in bed with the lobbyists and special interests, then (he) ain’t your guy.”

Candidates need to be upfront about their policies, so the public can elect them on that basis alone. Until they do, voters are playing a guessing game as to what each candidate actually brings to the table, and may end up with a president who’s better at getting elected than actually accomplishing things in the political arena.
A Summary of the Syrian Conflict, Russian Intervention and What We Should Do About It

By Avi Strauss

As the horrific four year Syrian conflict trudges on with no end in sight, and the majority of the world is twiddling its thumbs and engaging in “pinprick” strikes to quell the violence, one world leader has finally taken decisive action to tip the scales in favor of President Bashar al-Assad—Vladimir Putin, President of Russia. After several weeks of moving military forces and equipment to an air base in Latakia, an Assad stronghold, Russia has since struck over a hundred targets inside Syria by airstrike and cruise missile, under the banner of fighting Islamic State (ISIS or ISIL) terrorists. Yet, thus far, according to the US State Department, 90% of the Russian airstrikes have targeted Syrian rebel forces backed by the West.

Now, in a war that has claimed nearly 250,000 lives and displaced millions while tearing an entire country to shreds, the worst choice possible seems to be aiding the conflict’s instigator and removing its genocidal Violator of human rights. At this point it is inconceivable that Syria and all its sectarian divisions could ever be stabilized under the brutal dictator who has demonstrably such a callous disregard for human life. However, with no other countries stepping up with comprehensive plans to solve the intractable crisis, Putin’s Russia looks like the only candidate to end the chaos.

This necessarily forces the United States into a particularly precarious situation. Can the U.S. back-track on its condition that Assad must leave power as part of any resolution to the crisis? Should the US increase its support for “moderate” Syrian rebels to stave off their possible defeat in the face of an Assad-Putin alliance that may wipe out any chance of a rebel victory? With a war-weary American public and a presidential election on the horizon, is there any decisive action the US can take to counter Russia’s aggressive posture in Syria?

For now, much of the official American administration has been characterizing the conflict in terms of indignation and condemnation. Various American officials, including Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter, have gone on record calling Putin’s efforts “doomed to fail.” He added that while the Pentagon was willing to hold talks with Russia over how to solve the intractable crisis, Putin’s Russia looks like the only candidate to end the chaos.

Yet to take decisive action to ensure his overthrow.

But before we can assess whether Russia’s intervention is “doomed to fail”, a wise seizing of opportunity or something else altogether, we first must gain a better understanding of the conflict itself.

Most people hear “Civil War” or conflict and assume there are two sides fighting each other. Not so in the case of The Syrian Conflict which has as many as 5 sides fighting, if not more: First, there is President, Assad, his Alawite minority and assorted tribes (Druze and others) loyal to him and bolstered by Iran, Hezbollah and now Russia. This side is most prominent and is in a fight for its life given the stakes (automatic ouster from power) should it lose. Next, is the aforementioned Islamic State, fighting mostly in Eastern Syria and trying to wrench as much land and weapons as possible away from whomever they can. Bent on satisfying a warped view of their religion, they see no point in reconciliation and systematically target and murder anyone who doesn’t submit to their conception of Islam (which may include subjugation or forced conversion).

The other main faction is comprised of the moderate, secular rebels who are loosely coalesced around the banner of the Free Syrian Army which operates mostly in northern Syria and areas near Damascus. The U.S. has pledged support for this group in particular, and they receive “aid” in the form of the previously described training and humanitarian assistance. For now, they are also the main target of the government forces and lack an air force to defend themselves against Assad’s back- strutting the two groups’ ability to cooperate. In 2014, they declared the cities of Kobani, Efrin, and Cizire cantons in the new “Syrian Kurdistan”.

Lastly, there is Jabhat al Nusra (a branch of al Qaeda) that many would just conflate with ISIS, but which disagrees with ISIS and is competing for the mantle of dominant Islamic fighting force. In fact, this group has sworn off any alliance with ISIS due to the latter’s extreme methods.

For now, while the fighting rages on and analysts predict the long-term outcomes of the war, it is unclear which side will ultimately triumph, or what kind of power-sharing arrangement or division of land will be implemented as part of the solution to the crisis. This great question of whether Western leaders who are either too timid or unsure to bring an end to the conflict.

With that being laid out, America needs to chart its best course of action in both the short and long term. I think we’ve hesitated on what to do far too long. Putin has stepped in to defend the discord and, more importantly to him, protect his regional allies as he continues to work to make Russia the superpower of the Eastern Hemisphere, challenging the United States’ world hegemony. I think, regardless of his success, he certainly uses his military in a way that is far wiser than we have, dating back to the Vietnam War. He projects power without sacrificing thousands of soldiers’ lives and trillions of dollars. He steps in to defend, and the only ones involved (for now) in situations he knows he can handle at arms-length and in which he won’t face substantial backlash.

He also knows he can operate freely in the Middle East without risking severe military backlash (as long as Russian involvement remains in the air), because his country won’t be seen as the “Great Satan,” thereby preventing it from becoming the top target for international terror attacks.

Let us not forget, Putin was a Lieutenant Colonel in the infamous Russian KGB , and while many analysts are quick to dismiss his actions as misguided and erratic, his service and experience certainly lends to a sense of understanding of warfare than that of many analysts. So while it’s possible his Syrian strategy may be plagued by folly, and while some perceive his involvement in the Middle East as a distraction from his alleged failures in the conflict in Ukraine, I wouldn’t be so quick to dismiss his military and strategic acumen.

Which leads me to the Obama administration’s completely childish responses. In my mind, this is the international equivalent of shouting and stomping your feet with a spattering of self-righteousness. People in the administration (and their backers) are so convinced “20th century” strategy and diplomacy are outdated because they studied diplomacy and strategy in the ivory towers of Ivy League colleges and not by actually serving in the military."

"The Obama Administration’s Responses are the International Equivalent of Shouting and Stomping Your Feet, with a Spattering of Self-Righteousness. People in the Administration (and their Backers) are so Convinced “20th Century” Strategy and Diplomacy is Outdated Because They All Studied Diplomacy and Strategy in the Ivory Towers of Ivy League Colleges and Not by Actually Serving in the Military."

Another well established, yet lesser known group is the Kurds operating almost exclusively in northern Syria. In the hopes of forming a new independent country, Kurdistan, where they can have political autonomy, they have mobilized to defend their territory and repel any encroachment on their land. They were forced into this position when the government troops left Kurdish regions when the war started. Kurds across the region have been moving and pushing for autonomy for some time now and tend to be marginalized in Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Iran. None of those countries like the idea of an independent Kurdistan, because it would probably motivate their Kurdish minorities to seek independence as well. For the most part, the Kurds have proven to be effective in combating ISIS and have even taken back the city of Kobani, home to a large population of Kurds, in an effort backed by American airstrikes, demon-
Charity: Give and Let Live?

By Yadin Teitz

Go to any large synagogue in downtown Jerusalem on a weekday, and you’ll be sure to see a similar picture. To an outsider, it’s probably a strange sight. The congregants are in contemporary dress, wearing jeans and colorful shirt-socks, pressed khakis and classic button-downs. They pray with their cell phones on the table in front of them, or with them clasped to the belt buckles on their waists. Listen, and you’ll hear prayers conducted with the Sephardic pronunciation, the tall of modern Israel rather than the suf of Eastern Europe. You would rightly guess that these people are overwhelmingly profession- als; doctors and lawyers, hi-tech workers and scientists, accountants and businessmen (and retirees). Surely this is a Dati Leumi congregation.

But interspersed amongst these prayer- goers are dozens of other people, likewise in varying modes of dress and decorum. Some are attired in classic black coats from head to toe (although their socks do tend to be white), while others wear the signature gold and black striped tunics of their communities. These indi- viduals do not seem to be members of the congregation- they are ultra-Orthodox. So what is it that these ultra-Orthodox people are doing? Have they come to join for early morn- ing Shaarit prayers? Not quite. They pace up and down the aisles of the synagogues, hands outstretched as they jingle their fireins of coins and whisper “Gut Shabbes,” “Gut Yontif,” “Hachnasas Kallah,” or whatever the appropri- ate greeting may be that inspires congregants to open their purse strings to these beggars. They go from person to person, with eyes cast downward and an occasional smile. They are unabashed at their requests of money, knowing that their modern (read “wealthier”) brethren unabashed at their requests of money, knowing that their modern (read “wealthier”) brethren

My uneasiness grew after reading a September 30th inter- view with city councilor Hanan Rubin in the Times of Israel. Born and bred in Jerusalem, Rubin talks about the importance of maintaining Jerusalem as a city that belongs to everyone, regardless of religious affiliation. While he himself is an ob- servant Jew, he bails the rise of secular activity in Jerusalem because he understands the need for the city to be pluralistic and tolerant of all. He supported the opening of Yes Planet Jerusalem, a movie theater that is controversial because it is open on Shab- bar. He applauded the decision to have a café that would be open on Shabbat located in the heart of Independence Park. Both of these endeavors were hotly protested by Hare- dim, under the guise that they desecrated the religious nature of Jerusalem. While I am sympathetic to their reasoning, and have per- sonally found it difficult to watch Jews eat at restaurants and drive on Shabbat, my over- whelming concern is not for the busi- ness. I cannot control other people, and it is not my place to do so. Each person is entitled to live his life as he or she chooses, and a city cannot simply exclude or discriminate against a major part of its residents. The efforts of Haredi resi- dents to restrict the freedom of other residents is simply deplorable to me.

But there is a full host of other issues that our two communities disagree on. What about mandatory army service, for example? Why is it that every Jewish male citizen of the State of Israel must risk his life defending the State and its inhabitants, except for members of the Hare- di sector? Why are their 18 year old youths free to study and live with their families and relax and enjoy life whilst their counterparts suffer and toil from the burdens that fall on them from our enemies? How do their leaders continue to be- smirch the good name of the State and its army by refusing to force their students to enlist, and how dare they accept government money to support their yeshivot but deny the country any reciprocal payment?

And despite all the differences between us, they keep com- ing to our synagogues, and we keep supporting them. How do we explain this? I’ve watched as some of these individuals an- swer Amen, or murmur a prayer along with the congregants. This display of unity and love is truly heart-warming. But oth- ers, I’ve seen scamper away just before the start of Kedusha.

SEE CHARITY, CONT ON NEXT PAGE
It’s no secret that our beloved Yeshiva University is in the midst of trying times. As it was five years ago, it is still difficult to merely mention YU in conversation without inducing a sarcastic remark about its notorious financial predicament. What may be less obvious is that this challenging period comprises a critical juncture in the storied history of the institution. Last year’s academic “right-sizing” and the sudden appearance of YU Global have not been enough to make this clear. President Richard Joel’s recent announcement of his decision not to seek an additional term may be sufficient evidence that the university is at a crossroads. And as KETSH has not-so-quietly entered the scene, boasting of significant resources, I have yet to see a real challenge to the University, the center of Modern Orthodox communal life, as such an organization can expand the university’s reach beyond the Modern Orthodox community into other sectors and denominations, generating a universal relevance not seen since the early days of the institution and possibly convincing non-Modern Orthodox people to donate. Though it is only in its early stages, I can proudly say that the movement has already begun. Just a few weeks ago, I sent an email to the whole undergraduate student body about TheEruv, a new club I started to unite YU with the Jewish communities in Washington Heights and Midtown. Like most “[stud]” emails, mine were replete with exclamation points and corny lines and thus a ripe target for cynicism, but the responses I received reflected the exact opposite sentiment. Nearly 100 people signed up to receive weekly email updates about TheEruv’s programs and events—which include after-school programming for day school students and Shabbatominic services at senior centers and other colleges—and several of them submitted their own ideas. To me, it is a refreshing testament to the idealism that is still alive and well on campus, despite the pervasive negativity that has accompanied the difficult circumstances. Just as importantly, the community leaders whom I have contacted have all expressed the same enthusiasm as my fellow students, giving me confidence that there is a place for TheEruv in the Jewish community around YU.

To accomplish mission of uniting the Jewish community, however, TheEruv must be more than a community cheshed club. Clearly, while a fundamental value in its own right, is often a gateway to profound personal connections as well. The hope is that the personal relationships formed through TheEruv’s individual chesed oportunities, whether at hospitals, nursing homes, or less-attended weddings, give way to stronger spiritual bonds. The same goal can hopefully be achieved through Torah study groups with students at other New York City colleges and less observant Jews. And by bringing together these bonds at community-wide events such as open panel discussions and holiday chagigot, perhaps some sense of communal unity can finally be attained. It certainly will not be easy, but I believe the value of Jewish unity, especially in times like these, is well worth all the effort required.

This all seems very nice on a theoretical level, but will TheEruv’s programs accomplish the club’s greater goals in practice? The answer depends on us, the student body of YU. If we want to demonstrate that YU is part of the Jewish communal conversation in New York City, if we want to foster the development of Jewish communal life, we must create these connections ourselves. The future of YU as an institution is bound up in our efforts and as much as it depends on the efforts of the Administration. With the current state of Modern Orthodoxy hanging in the balance, and with no plan in place to change that, we truly are the future of this institution.

By Netanel Pales

UNITED WE ACT

CHARTER, CONT FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

so as not to be forced to join with the heathens in our holiest supplication. Still others will continue their journey in behalf of their congregants, oblivious to what passage of prayer the congregation has come to. Perhaps our prayer is not their prayer. Perhaps our Torah is not their Torah. Perhaps our beliefs are not their beliefs. But our money? Our money is their money, and our money is good enough for them.

And in most cases, we’re happy to give our money. At my minyan one morning, a congregant assented a beggar by asking him, loudly, so that everyone could hear: “How old are you? Too old to work? Why can’t you get a job and support yourself that way? Why do I have to pay for you?” The young man he was addressing simply smiled smugly, and said nothing. Maybe he acknowledged in his heart that there was something strange about this, that his livelihood depended on people he wouldn’t otherwise have nothing to do with, but that wasn’t going to propel a change in his actions. The young man walked away, and continued his collecting. Yet this type of outbreak is rare. Most of us will give a coin and carry on, with our prayers, with our Torah, with our beliefs. I, for one, was embarrassed and ashamed at the boldness of my fellow congregant. This is not what we do. We don’t. We don’t even think about it, or ask questions. We give, and we don’t question to whom we are giving to, and why.

It is laudable that we are willing to give to whomever comes to use with hands outstretched, and that we deny no one money that they so desperately need, especially when we have money for giving. But by supporting them, are we also approving their lifestyles and their beliefs? When we give a coin, are we essentially saying: “Here. Please don’t take this as a call to action. What, indeed, would happen if we only gave charity to those of whom we approved? Would we give only to men, or only to women? Would we deny anyone who is in traditional dress, or who is modernly dressed? What about Democrats and Republicans, liberals and conservatives? Maybe we should only give those whose outlooks on life align with our own. Maybe we should only give people with families, and not those who are single. Maybe only older individuals are deserving of our money, and not the young, able-bodied ones. It is quick to see how this could get out of hand. And the bottom line remains the same: a needy Jew is a needy Jew, and we have an obligation to help those who are less fortunate. But perhaps we need to be more aware of what we are doing, and of the message we are sending. Should charity be given in a vacuum, or do we stop to consider exactly to whom we are giving our hard earned money?
The Executive Series: An Interview with Laizer Kornwasser

By Raymond Cohen

About The Executive Series: 'The Executive Series' provides access to the thoughts and experiences of highly accomplished individuals in the business world. Through its conversational style the column expresses the unique story of each business leader, including their motivations, struggles, successes and failures. 'The Executive Series' also serves as a forum for a broader conversation about leadership in business and in life.

About Mr. Laizer Kornwasser (Adapted from Bloomberg.com): Mr. Laizer D. Kornwasser served as an Executive Vice President and Company Group Chairman of Valeant Pharmaceuticals International, Inc. from February 1, 2013 to July 2015. Mr. Kornwasser served as an Executive officer of Medco Health from 2003 to 2011. Previously, he held positions at Merrill Lynch and Coopers & Lybrand and served as an Associate Professor of Yeshiva University. He is a Director of Everyday Health, Inc. and is currently advising various Private Equity investors in the healthcare space. Mr. Kornwasser holds a B.S. in Accounting from Yeshiva University in 1992 and a Master in Business Administration from Harvard Business School in 1996.

Mr. Kornwasser currently serves as a member of the board of trustees of Yeshiva University with the goal of assisting Chairman Mosheh Straus, President Richard Joel, and the administration on thinking through the current situation from a business perspective, teaching a course in SSSB called Managing a Growing Business.

RC: Who, would you say, had the greatest influence on you as an emerging leader?

LK: My biggest role model would be my father. I was blessed to be able to spend time with him on business trips. When he would be involved in negotiations, I would be the ‘fly on the wall’ observing his every move. He showed me what it means to lead with passion and to be successful. My father had founded, and was the CEO of, a Real Estate Investment Trust. He always taught me the importance of being kind to others. He would go around the office every day to say hello to everybody regardless of how busy he was.

RC: When was the first time you considered yourself a leader, and how did that experience help you as you advanced to more sophisticated leadership positions?

LK: My first leadership position was student council president of my elementary school. That experience taught me not to view my age as a disadvantage. I had skipped a grade and was the youngest in my class, so that role taught me that leadership can be achieved regardless of one’s age. Another formative leadership position I held was as student president of the Sy Syms School of Business. I was very studious and was passionate about a couple of student issues regarding Sy Syms, and I learned that leadership is first and foremost about the ability to convince others to embrace change and recognize potential.

RC: Why did you choose to get an MBA? And how do you compare the experience with your original expectations?

LK: After college, I decided to go into accounting and went to work for Coopers & Lybrand (which later merged to become the ‘C’ in PwC). I spent two years there and then got accepted and decided to go to Harvard Business School. I always knew I wanted to get a business degree. I thought I was going to go into my family business and I figured that if I was going to join the company, I wanted to have some credentials behind me. I also knew that I wanted to broaden my horizons, I really wanted the experience of understanding the business world from a completely different perspective.

I had a great experience, and was fascinated by the case study method. Business school changed the way I think. It changed the way I analyze; it changed the way I make decisions. It also broadened my horizons from a network perspective. The experience of Business School is not just what you learn; it’s who you learn it with.

RC: What was the toughest moment of your career?

LK: After being laid off from Walker Digital due to the fact that the “Internet Bubble” had burst, I decided I wanted to return to investment banking. I was able to get to a position where Lehman Brothers made me an offer to join their Telecom, Media and Technology group.

The next day I got a call from Merrill-Lynch, who I had worked for previously, saying: “we hear you’re coming back to Investment Banking, why don’t you come back to us.” I called Lehman Brothers and told them I would be going to Merrill-Lynch because I was more familiar with the people there. They said, ‘once you give it up there is no turning back’. I said ‘That’s ok.’ The following Monday I came in to Merrill-Lynch and the head of the division says: ‘I have your offer, but I can’t give it to you - the Company announced a hiring freeze on Sunday. I told everyone about your situation but unfortunately there is nothing I can do.’ This was a bump in salary, a bump in title and substantial equity. The reason why I tell you this is because you never know how life takes its course; everything turns out min-Hashamayim. I would have spent the next 10 years becoming a Managing Director in either Lehman Brothers or Merrill-Lynch, with my compensation tied to their stock - and then when the mortgage crisis hit the financial markets my equity in either bank would have been wiped out.

RC: How did you end up in healthcare after accounting and real estate investment banking?

I got a call from a friend of mine who I had previously worked with who asked me to join business development for a company called Medco Health. Medco was being spun out from Merck and I liked the idea that it was being spun out as the ‘Problem Child’. To me that meant opportunity. I did not have any healthcare experience, nor did I think I was going into healthcare. I remember my first meeting with the CEO, David Snow – he asked me ‘why should we hire you?’ and I said to him ‘I have no experience in healthcare, but if you want someone who is going to get you to the finish line first, then bet on me.’

RC: How were you able to compensate for your lack of industry expertise?

LK: Medco hired me for business development and internal turnaround. I had the ability to make deals, to understand numbers, problem solve and act as a business manager. You need to be able to communicate. You need to know when you know an answer, but also when you don't know an answer and get the right help to get there. So, in my mind, if you've got a good business sense, you can communicate and you can lead, you don't necessarily need to be an industry expert - that's not the case with all industries but with many industries it does apply.

The same thing happened at Valeant. I had industry exposure, but didn’t grow up in the ‘pharma world’. And most of the executives at Valeant did not grow up in the ‘pharma world’ either which allowed us to approach the marketplace with a different mind frame, with the inherent assumption that the current pharma process could be improved. It’s a lot easier to improve upon a model if you’re not in it and if you’re coming from the outside. So to me the key was identifying what I know and what I don't know. In the areas that you don’t know, you need to find people you can trust that you can lean on for advice. For example, research & development - I’m not a doctor - I’m not someone who is going to make those decisions, but it’s about getting the right people at the table.

RC: What factors do you consider to be a must-have for any company worth joining?

LK: My philosophy is that you have to put yourself in a position to constantly grow and learn because that's how you get ahead. Another major factor is confidence in leadership. When I joined Medco Health, I knew that the executive team there had leaders whom I could learn from and I felt that they were going to be successful. The same was true with Valeant. Whatever you do, you have to join companies whose leadership you have confidence in to achieve success, otherwise you're just wasting your time.

RC: You’ve spent most of your career working for large corporations, could you explain why you prefer that setting over a more entrepreneurial environment?

LK: Well, you could have an entrepreneurial mindset in a large corporation. When I was at Medco, one of the reasons we were able to grow from a $6 billion company to over a $30 billion was because we had an entrepreneurial frame of mind combined with the resources of a large firm. So, I very much consider myself to be entrepreneurial.

RC: What was the biggest obstacle you had to overcome to achieve success in your career?

LK: My biggest obstacle was that since I started out in Accounting and Investment Banking, it took me some time to step away and realize that while numbers are important in terms of making business decisions, they are only one data point in arriving at what is ultimately the correct solution. And if you only make your decision solely based on a spreadsheet, you probably won't end up with the right answer.

RC: You’ve been active with community service throughout your career; could you describe some of the challenges that you’ve had balancing community service with work life?

LK: You know, it’s always a struggle - especially the earlier on you are in your career, you will always have challenges in balancing different situations. It’s less of an issue with regard to community vs. work because the reality is, when you are young in your career, work can be all encompassing. The amount of time I gave to

"WHATEVER YOU DO, YOU HAVE TO JOIN COMPANIES WHOSE LEADERSHIP YOU HAVE CONFIDENCE IN TO ACHIEVE SUCCESS." - LAIZER KORNWASSER
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my community earlier on in my career is nowhere near the amount of time I’m giving today. The struggles really become combining family, work and religion. The key thing is knowing your priorities and not deviating from them. People will respect your balance so long as you don’t make it an “excuse”. If I ever left a team working on Friday, I would always let them know that I will get the job done by Monday morning. Regardless if it meant coming in on Saturday night or Sunday. But you need to understand that you can’t just take, you need to give - and you should also view giving as receiving. For me, there is tremendous reward to giving. Whether that means giving financially, whether it’s giving time, or even sitting down with a student to help them think through their career - that’s what gives me pleasure.

By Eliezer Sundel

In what was the biggest technology deal in history, Dell agreed to purchase EMC Corp. for $67 billion. While there are only a few companies that are capable of executing a complicated deal like this one, for a much smaller price, anyone can actually purchase their own piece of a company, albeit a smaller share of a company, by investing in a company’s stock. Stock investing, whether done on your own or on your behalf, should have a place in everyone’s life as a chance to increase one’s wealth. However, with anything else in life that is worth your time, research and knowledge are of the utmost importance. This article will give the reader some basic terminology and knowledge of the stock markets, and will provide examples with well-known companies.

What is a stock? Simply put, it represents an ownership or a share in a company; just like a typical ownership position, you are entitled to a company’s assets and profits. There are two main types of stock: preferred and common. Although it might seem as though preferred stock is “preferred,” that is certainly not always the case. Preferred is only “preferred” for the main reason that in case of a company’s bankruptcy its owners have a higher priority to any leftover shares (preferred stockholders), and periodically, almost every company will distribute a stream of fixed payments, called dividends. On the flip side, the relative predictability and safety of preferred stock makes it less prone to the vicissitudes of the market, causing it to often lag behind its counterpart’s appreciation. Not all companies have both types of stocks, but almost all with common stock that one has, the greater ownership that he/she possesses—owning two slices of a pizza obviously represents a larger share of the overall pie than just one slice. The total number of shares of a company multiplied by its stock price gives you its market capitalization. This is what the company is worth in the public’s eyes, i.e. the whole pizza pie. This, however, is not necessarily its “real” and inherent value, i.e. I can buy a potato chip for $1.00, which is clearly overpaying. Apple has a stock price of $111.79 and 5.7 billion shares outstanding (shares that are owned outside of the company) bringing it to a world-leading market capitalization of $637.5 billion (as of this writing). As of October 13, 2015, one share of Microsoft was worth $46.89, which represents a 1/8.93 billionth ownership in the company. However small that may seem, 10 years ago that same share was about $25 cheaper. You can do the math, but if you would have purchased 100 shares back then, you could buy plenty of Zeide’s Nuggets at Golan Heights today.

You may have used a service such as Uber or Instacart recently, had a great experience, and now want to invest in the company. Unfortunately, some companies like Uber and Instacart are private, meaning they’re not publicly traded consequently cannot be purchased by everyday investors. Microsoft on the other hand is a public company and its shares can therefore be purchased. In theory, if you buy a share in Microsoft, you now have a claim on Bill Gates’ old desk, have a say in who is elected CEO, and all while not incurring the same liabilities as privately-held Uber’s executives. Some of the greatest investors think within this framework—because even they can get lost in the trees and not see the forest. They see every dollar as an investment in a company. They picture themselves sitting besides Bill Gates’ desk as opposed to a stock-purchase certificate on the computer. In fact, the only risk that you possess is losing any money you invested. This may seem far-fetched, but it has happened on occasion, mostly due to corporate scandals or exorbitant debt requirements. To illustrate, former investment banking behemoth Lehman Brothers was sitting atop the financial world with a top-five ranking in worldwide investment banks. At one point in 2007 it was trading at $86.18 per share, giving it a market capitalization close to $60 billion. Amidst insurmountable financial obligations, its share price plummeted to $3.65, ultimately causing its sudden purchase by Barclays for a fraction of the price. Someone who was still invested in the company when its price plummeted would have lost a lot of money.

As touched on earlier, some companies are private, like Uber and Dell, and are thus inaccessible to the general public, while others like Microsoft, McDonalds and Nike are, mainly through exchanges. Simply, an exchange is an interface that brings together buyers and sellers within the general stock market. The exchange can either be a physical location, with the most famous being the New York Stock Exchange, otherwise known as NYSE or the “big board”, or a virtual one, where trades can be executed electronically, most famously through the NASDAQ. Additionally, an exchange can be anywhere across the world—anywhere from the Chicago, Frankfurt, Sydney, to Tel Aviv. For the most part, trades can only be executed on that respective exchange during set hours. The New York Stock Exchange trades from 9:30am to 4:00pm on a regular day and is closed for Shabbos, Sunday and some holidays.

Now that you know a little about stocks, the obvious question is what causes them to go up sometimes, and unfortunately for investors plummet at other times? At the core, supply and demand is the catalyst—if a company is in higher demand than it is supplied, it will go up, and the reverse applies. It is for that reason that stock prices are constantly changing, as people want things at different times. That part is simple. The harder part is determining the stimuli behind the many decisions of the participants of the market. Until today, no one has mastered this. There are many theories, some of which have even won Nobel Prizes. The consensus is that the amount that the company earns is a major factor, since no investment is worthwhile if it doesn’t make money. But, there are also more outlandish theories, such as the “Super Bowl Indicator,” where overall prices are determined by the conference of the winning football team. At the end of the day, it is important to remember that investing is an art and not a science, and that no one is yet to master the trade. It is said, that the best traders correctly pick a stock 51% of the time. Where else do you have an opportunity to be wrong 49% of the time and still succeed?

Stock Basics for Dummies

“...FOR A MUCH SMALLER PRICE, ANYONE CAN ACTUALLY PURCHASE THEIR OWN PIECE OF A COMPANY, ALBEIT A SMALLER SHARE OF A COMPANY, BY INVESTING IN A COMPANY’S STOCK. STOCK INVESTING... SHOULD HAVE A PLACE IN EVERYONE’S LIFE AS A CHANCE TO INCREASE ONE’S WEALTH.”

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Key Career Guidance For Aspiring Accountants

By Etan (Alex) Neiman

Large or mid-size firm? Tax or audit? For many accounting students, these career-deciding decisions are just around the corner. Other accounting students have more time before these decisions are made but still must start to consider the right career path. The problem is that determining the right position at the right firm can be tougher than finding cold water in The Caf. Luckily for us, others have been where we YU accounting students stand today and have come out on the other side with long, successful accounting careers.

In an attempt to sort through all of the career possibilities, I recently interviewed four YU alumni in the accounting field, three of whom have over fifty years of combined public accounting experience, and one recent graduate who not too long ago was making his own major career decisions. We broke down the key factors YU accounting students must consider before arriving at the right position at the right firm.

The Panelists:

Jonathan Sicklick (JS): Sicklick (Y’98) is a director in audit at Deloitte, concentrating on technology and media companies as well as law firms. He has been at Deloitte his entire career.

Nachson Block (NB): Block (Y’05) is a senior manager at EY in the Banking and Capital Markets group within the Financial Services office. He has been at EY his entire career.

Jeffrey Resnick (JR): Resnick (Brooklyn College ’83) is a partner with a focus in tax at WeiserMazars, a top 25 accounting firm. He started his own practice in 1990 and has subsequently merged three times, most recently with WeiserMazars in 2013.

Benj Blumenthal (BB): Blumenthal (Y’15) is a first year audit associate at Frost Ruttenberg & Rothblatt, a well-respected, mid-size Chicago accounting firm.

What is the path from YU graduate to partner at your firm?

NB: The general career path is staff for two years, three years as a senior, three years as a manager and then senior manager until partner. There are opportunities for early promotion, but I would say the overwhelming majority of EY employees follow that career path.

Author’s Note: The large firms generally follow a path to partner along these lines.

JR: Within ten to twelve years, if someone stays on the track, they will be a partner at WeiserMazars. 2 years as a staff accountant, 3 years as a senior, 2-3 years as a manager and 3-4 years as a senior manager.

What are some of the advantages of working at a large firm?

JS: At a large firm, there is a much larger client base, so you get varied experiences. I’ve worked on start-up companies and was exposed to full audits as a young staff member. As a manager, I began working on larger publicly traded media companies and one of the largest privately owned media companies. My experiences as a staff allowed me to adjust and be able to see the big picture on larger audits. An additional advantage of a large firm is that it comes with a lot of scheduling flexibility, which is key when you’re leaving early every single Friday for the majority of busy season.

Author’s Note: Other advantages include, but are not limited to, the tremendous resources, as well as the network of YU alumni and distinguished professionals.

What are some of the advantages of working at a mid-size firm?

JR: If a student coming out of YU goes to a tax or audit department at one of the large firms, the likelihood is that he or she is going to be working (significant) hours. To try to have a life where you also have family time and religious studies is very difficult. WeiserMazars stresses work-life balance. If someone wants to stay in public accounting, a mid-size firm is a great option. You will work with great clients and make a nice income for your family.

BB: The advantage of a mid-size firm is that the firm is like a family. My mentor and I have meetings and lunches to keep track of my progress, and I am comfortable asking questions. The firm is very accommodating to Jews and all religions with flexible holiday scheduling.

Audit or Tax?

JS: In tax, you are working with the company and can bring clear tax savings that translates directly into dollars, while in audit you are working for the shareholders and the public at large, where these third parties and the capital markets as a whole rely on us.

NB: I believe that audit provides one an opportunity to fully understand the inner workings of a company, such as how the company is looking to create efficiencies and how and why they are making their business decisions. I believe that if I would run my own business, my audit experience has provided me with the required foundation needed to be successful. On the other hand, I believe there is an appeal to the tax practice as well, as one can analogize tax consulting work with learning Gemara. In both cases, a text is analyzed (in tax it would be the tax code) with an attempt to identify a certain phrase or application of a specific phrase that can be applied to benefit your client.

JR: I don’t know if there’s really a benefit to either one; it’s what you like. There are people who are more inclined to choose one over the other. In my opinion, if someone doesn’t know where they want to go, it’s easier to start in audit and switch to tax. By selecting audit, you will gain an understanding of how the numbers flow and a general understanding of how a business operates.

What are some misconceptions about working at accounting firms?

JS: Your goal should be to make manager in whatever firm you’re in and then assess your career and decide what you want to do next. You do not learn enough being in a firm for only two or three years. If you leave before you’re a manager, you are making a mistake and not taking advantage of the opportunity that you were provided.

NB: A big misconception is the type of people that work in accounting. The people I work with are fantastic, engaging, entertaining and interesting, as opposed to the general stereotype of accountants (being boring people).

JR: There is a mindset that only if you cannot get into a large firm, then you should go to any of the mid-size firms. I believe that a disservice is being done to YU students; the students should be looking at mid-size firms not as a secondary choice but as a conscious choice. Think it out. Why do you want to be in a large firm? Why do you want to be in a mid-size firm? The top students should be applying to all of them depending on their choices.

BB: In terms of mid-size and small firms, there exists a major misconception about compensation. Salaries at mid-size firms and small firms are competitive with the large firms.

Author’s Note: The Robert Half 2015 Accounting Salary Guide supports Blumenthal’s findings about public accounting salaries. Though the large firms offer the highest salaries, there is not a steep drop-off in mid-size and small firms.

What are the characteristics you are looking for in an associate at your firm?

JS: For me, success as an associate is a product of three things:

A) Always have the right attitude. Give everything and seek additional work.

B) Know what you don’t know. There is nothing wrong with saying “I do not know” to a client. Do the research, and get back to them.

C) Be responsive. My clients all know that I get back to them ASAP. I once got an email from a client and it took me more than a few hours to get back to them. They were (genuinely) concerned something was wrong.

JR: Work effectively, ask questions, and take ownership. I want that next student who comes out of school to be the best and the brightest so that they can eventually be my partner. That would be the best thing in the world for me.

What advice would you give to a YU accounting student?

JS: Try to get the CPA done before you start work. It will make your life so much easier, as you will not have to worry about starting work and studying at the same time.

NB: Being an observant Jew in corporate America is not so easy and requires hard work and dedication to be successful. One must realize that while everyone understands that you are not available on Saturday when the team is working, it might require working on a Sunday when the team is not working. You don’t want to be viewed as the type of person that’s taking advantage of being a Sabbath observer, one who disappears at 3:00 (on Friday when the team is working Saturday) and comes back Monday morning.

JR: Keep all of your options open. Explore all firms and what the pros and cons are. Where do you think you are going to be down the road and will that firm offer you what you want? It could be that a large firm is better for you; it could be that a mid-size or small firm is better for you.

BB: Form as many good relationships as possible. If you are looking for a job, make sure to use all of your contacts as well as go to every job fair. When you start working, ask as many questions as possible to your mentor or senior. They know it’s your first year, and they don’t expect you to know everything.
By Benjamin Zirman

Do you have trouble paying attention, have hyperactivity, or suffer from impulsivity? Well you very well might have ADHD. Not to worry though, more than 11 percent of American children also suffer from ADHD according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. In addition, about 4 percent of American adults live with ADHD every day. These numbers are on the rise as there have been 24 percent more diagnoses over the past 8 years. An Israeli startup company called Alcobra has an innovative new ADHD drug called Metadoxine Extended Release (MDX) that will take the market by storm when it comes out later this year.

Alcobra is an Israeli startup company started in 2008 and headquartered in Tel Aviv. The CEO and President is Dr. Yaron Daniely. Daniely spent his early years in Tel Aviv before moving to Florida and continuing on to NYU School of Medicine where he received a Ph.D. He also got an MBA from the Technion in Israel. He has been the CEO and President since 2008 and has totally changed the company. Alcobra actually developed the drug for ADHD by accident. The company was founded by Dr. Dalia Meguido and Udi Gilboa to work on developing metadoxine, in order to create a pill that would prevent alcohol from affecting the brain. It was supposed to quickly reduce blood levels so people could get behind the wheel and drive shortly after drinking. The results showed that the drug had no impact on lowering blood-alcohol levels and had no impact on cognitive abilities.

“In driving, memory, and attention tests that were conducted, it was as though those people were not drunk, despite the fact that, in terms of the amount of alcohol in their blood, it was not clear that they would be able to stand on their own two feet. So the idea to treat Attention Deficit Disorder came about” said current CEO and President Yaron Daniely. Alcobra has become one of the hottest companies since then with their new focus on attention and concentration on ADHD.

By Dovid Simpser

Imagine having the power to impact thousands of lives with the decisions you make everyday--such is the gravitas of being an executive of a nonprofit organization. Their decisions impact not only their own institution, and also its stakeholders and the broader community that they’re part of as well. How did leaders get to their current positions? Were their original professional aspirations always in the nonprofit sector? Through interviewing two non-profit executives, Michael Feinman and Dr. Alisa Rubin Kurshan, senior vice president of the UJA-Federation of New York, we were able to see the unique paths that led them to their respective leadership roles.

Michael Feinman woke up to a career that wasn’t what he had envisioned for himself. After working in sales for ten years, he realized that this was not the life he had wanted. “I was in a field that I wasn’t happy or satisfied with,” he remarked. Feinman went back to the drawing board, and through discussions with friends and role models, he decided that a Master’s degree in social work would be the perfect window into a meaningful career. So that’s exactly what he did, receiving his master’s degree from Yeshiva University’s Wurzweiler School of Social Work.

After completing his master’s degree, Feinman started at the very bottom as an intern at the UJA-Federation of New York, but through hard work and high aspirations, he “worked his way up the ladder” until he became the Executive Director of the Jewish National Fund - Greater New York Region (JNF). When asked what advice he would offer to those interested in the nonprofit sector, Feinman emphasized the importance of making your career your own. “What is your ‘fill in the blank’ story?” Feinman would challenge those interested in the nonprofit sector. “My ‘JFN’ story is mine – it takes time to develop but I can talk about what JFN means to me and it’s real.”

Feinman came to the realization that there was something missing in his life, something in his regular job that was lacking. A job simply paying the bills just wasn’t enough anymore. That all changed when he started his career working in a nonprofit organization. To Feinman, “Working in the nonprofit sector, especially focusing on children, had a big impact on me. I believe I’m proud of the work and I am proud of the organization.”

Dr. Alisa Rubin Kurshan has her own unique story of how she ended up as the Senior Vice President of Strategic Planning and Organizational Resources at the UJA. Kurshan described how she was a “mathematician who loved to teach math.” Motivated to help struggling students, she felt that she could change the way students thought about math, and help them feel confident when faced with difficult equations. She believed that “every high school student needed one great math teacher and then there would be no fear of math anymore.” Kurshan wanted to be that teacher.

The Nonprofit Life

Almost 5% of adults around the world have ADHD but many more adults remain undiagnosed and untreated. The most common problems on the market now can be divided into two categories: stimulants such as Ritalin, Adderall, and Concerta and the non stimulant drugs such as Strattera. There are problems with both types of ADHD medication. Between 30 to 40 percent of those who take stimulants for ADHD either do not respond to or do not tolerate the treatments. Additionally, stimulants have many negative side effects including uncomfortable mental states, interference with sleep and appetite, development of nervous tics and increased blood pressure. Even more scary is the high likelihood of abuse as these drugs are controlled substances. Therefore, the drug market has been leaning towards non-stimulants but unfortunately they have not been nearly as effective in dealing with the symptoms. The only FDA approved non-stimulant, Strattera, also brings with it side effects sleepiness, headache, abdominal pain or upset stomach, nausea and vomiting, dizziness, mood swings, and uptakes of suicidal thoughts. The current market options clearly all have their downsides and the platform is set for a game changing drug to be developed.

While Alcobra has developed MDX as a non-stimulant pill, the results show that it is twice as effective as regular non-stimulant drugs and as effective as stimulant drugs. Even better, no side effects beside slight nausea have been reported by users. MDX has multiple applications to other CNS disorders including the rare Fragile X Syndrome (FXS).

Fragile X Syndrome is a genetic condition that causes learning disabilities and cognitive impairment. The FDA has already approved use of the drug to treat Fragile X Syndrome. MDX for ADHD is in its final stages of testing and should be approved by the FDA in the upcoming months.

From this writer’s point of view, Alcobra is an exciting company, both because of what they’ve been able to accomplish and for MDX’s potential. Although they started as a small Israeli startup, they have been able to scale to the United States’ market and compete with pre-existing companies there. Additionally, they have gathered a board of directors consisting of renowned doctors and scientists that will help the company immensely as they continue to test their product. I expect Alcobra to take up a large share of the current 4 billion dollar market that exists for ADHD medication. The stock currently closed at 6.28 dollars and I expect that number to skyrocket once the company completes testing and receives FDA approval for MDX. Alcobra’s revolutionary pill is right around the corner, and with it may come a solution to the growing epidemic of ADHD.

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