

"DON'T FORGET  
TO VOTE!"

# THE COMMENTATOR

The Independent Student Newspaper of Yeshiva University

"THANKS FOR THE  
REMINDER,  
KIND BOX!"

VOL. LXXXIV

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ISSUE NO. 3

## Coed Shabbaton to Take Place Uptown Next Spring

By BENJAMIN KOSLOWE

Student leaders, the Office of Student Life (OSL) and administrators from the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (RIETS) are in the final stages of planning an uptown coed Shabbaton for the Spring 2018 semester.

Coed Shabbatons regularly take place at the Beren Campus, although Wilf Campus coed Shabbatons, despite having been proposed by various student governments, have not materialized in recent years. Commentator archives indicate that an Intercollegiate Shabbaton, sponsored by the Yeshiva College and Stern College for Women student councils, took place at YU's Washington Heights campus in May 1980.

According to Yeshiva Student Union (YSU) President Nolan Edmonson, the OSL

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SCDS rehearsing "Our Town" in the Schottenstein Theater in 2017. See "SCDS to Receive Academic Credit for Fall Production" on page 8.

SCDS FACEBOOK PAGE

## More Than 60 Percent of YU Undergraduates Lean Republican, Younger Undergraduates Tend More Republican Than Older Students, Poll Finds

By AVI HIRSCH and  
BENJAMIN KOSLOWE

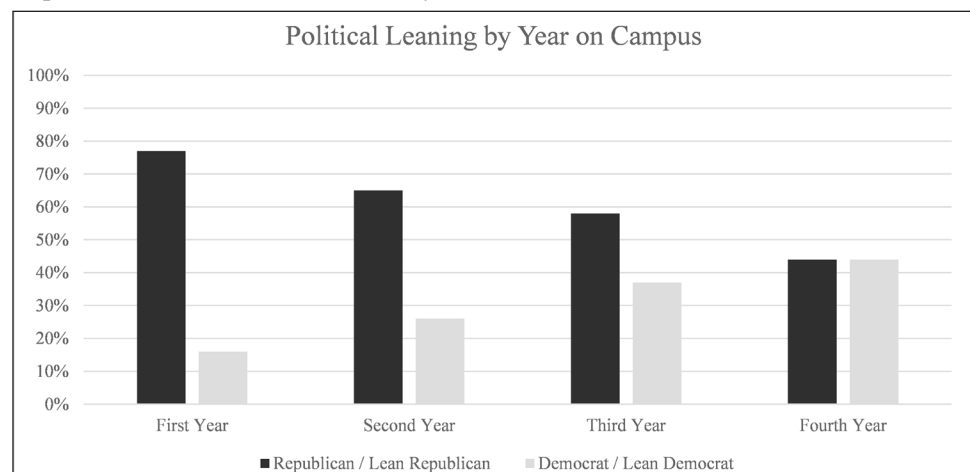
A recent poll conducted by The Commentator found that a majority of YU undergraduate students identify as Republicans or lean Republican. The results also indicated that younger Yeshiva University undergraduate students tend to be notably more conservative than older students.

77 percent of first year students identify as Republicans or lean Republican, compared to 65 percent of students in their second year,

58 percent of third years and only 44 percent of fourth years. Responses indicated a similar trend regarding undergraduate support of the recent Kavanaugh nomination and President Trump, with younger students tending to be more supportive of them than older students.

"It is exciting to have some reliable data about the political climate on campus," said Professor Silke Aisenbrey, the Chair of the Department of Sociology and one of the professors who was consulted for advice on polling methodology. "I'm happy that the students

*Continued on Page 3*



## Admissions Rejects Model UN Topic Paper on Sexual Minorities

By COMMENTATOR STAFF

Yeshiva University's Office of Admissions recently rejected a Model United Nations topic paper dealing with state-sponsored persecution of sexual minorities across the world.

The paper, titled "State-Sponsored Legal Discrimination and Violence Against Sexual Minorities," was for the Model UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC), which is chaired this year by SCWSC President Shoshana Marder. Its aim was to debate state-sponsored legal discrimination of

for comment, Geri Mansdorf, the University's Director of Undergraduate Admissions — the department responsible for overseeing the event — explained, "It was a decision that was made in the best interest of the high school students who are coming to attend." According to Mansdorf, the decision's intention was to prevent any conversation or comments related to the LGBTQ community that may be triggering for some high school students to whom the topic may be sensitive and personal, as many delegates will be representing countries with a negative — if not hostile — stance towards sexual minorities.

*"Student leaders took time out of their busy schedules to run Model United Nations and were treated like children by their administration. I feel that the students involved are owed an apology."*

Judah Stiefel, Chair of the Model UN International Maritime Organization (IMO)

sexual minorities, which aspects of familial and economic life should be regulated from an international level and how to ensure the protection of the rights and lives of sexual minorities.

When approached by The Commentator

Mansdorf declined requests to comment further, stating that "it is not a topic that really requires a lot of discussion," emphasizing that the decision was made

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# FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

## There Is No Better Time Than Now to Skip Classes

By **BENJAMIN KOSLOWE**

Time moves faster in the middle of the fall. Libraries that were empty only weeks ago now teem with nervous, tired creatures who labor for hours each night. Students in cafeterias anxiously drum their fingers as they wait on line, craning their necks to glance at the clock and make sure that they don't waste any free moment between classes. The word "midterm" becomes a significant part of undergraduate vocabulary, uttered typically with that staccato cadence that might call attention to a crouching enemy growling threateningly just around the next corner.

In just a few days, the clock will wind back one hour, effectively rendering the concept of late afternoon sunshine a mere abstraction for the next three or so months. As the temperature slowly dips from crisp to cold to arctic, wardrobes will follow suit by losing color and gaining layers.

Can one combat the melancholic November night? Is it possible to get away from the intensity — work, weather and all — one last time before the inevitable winds of winter?

The answers to these questions are emphatic yesses. And they involve skipping class.

Certain premises employed thus far, which gaze selectively at the severity of November's academic calendar and outdoor conditions, have tacitly misrepresented the truth of the matter. There is a broader picture beyond the narrow scope hitherto utilized. Exams and papers may be piling up, but they are not all that exists in November Student's life. Winter may draw nigh, but not before an explosion of color with autumn foliage.

Autumn passes almost as soon as it arrives. For only a few weeks, just beyond the cement jungle that is Manhattan, forests of deciduous trees all but beg citydwellers to traverse their rocky trails and bask in the pleasing sights of their rolling vistas. Wait until Thanksgiving, though, and it just might be too late.

Take a day off from school to go on a hike. Seriously, a hike. Even just one afternoon is something. It is true that classes, tests, essays and grades are important (very important, in fact). It is true that writing for and reading biweekly editions of this newspaper, in all of its analytic, thoughtful, creative, data-heavy and critical glory, is worthwhile. But these things are not running away so quickly. They can bear individuals' absence for a day.

The benefit is worth the cost. At the end of a semester, the most memorable moments are those spent in between the work: The outings at the end of a busy week, the Shabbos meals with strangers or even the hallway conversations between classes. These and other social interactions are fuel that energizes and reminds students, even in the lonely and stifling morass of real-life responsibilities, that they are more than just their academic pursuits.

Nature offers a similar respite. It is real in a way that intellectual studies can never be. It is unconscious and quiet, a world apart from the stuff of human invention or corruption. It is austere, beautiful and good for the soul. And it is within reach.

The Catskills contain many hikes of varying difficulty, and they are only an hour's drive away from the City. Closer yet are the Hudson Highlands, which feature Breakneck Ridge and Bear Mountain, two hikes that overflow with young adventurers during the summer but which empty out during the school year. And for all the flack that New Jersey suffers, it is home to fantastic flora, fauna and seemingly endless hills around the Delaware Water Gap, including the wonderful Worthington State Forest and High Point State Park.

*Exams and papers may be piling up, but they are not all that exists in November Student's life.*

Don't have quite enough time or means to venture far out? Take a break and stroll to a nearby park. Bryant Park and Fort Tryon Park are well-known, but there are other gems too. Just behind Belfer Hall, for instance, is Highbridge Park, whose paths wind through untouched schist rock and leafy bird-filled trees down to the East River. Walk half a mile north to find Swindler Cove, a little enclave surrounded by water with a fish pond and a sandy peninsula where ducks and herons gather.

As busy as November might seem now, the relentless clock will take a calming breath before the semester draws to a close. There will be plenty of time for serious studying and essay-writing before and during Reading Week. So push all of that off and put down this newspaper — just for a bit — and take a break in the colorful autumn outdoors. Even just once. It'll be worth it.

## Condolences

By **THE COMMENTATOR EDITORIAL BOARD**

We of The Commentator Editorial Board are shocked and horrified by the recent massacre at the Tree of Life Congregation in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. We extend our deepest and heartfelt condolences to the families of the victims. May the families be comforted amongst the mourners of *Tziyon* and *Yerushalayim*.



## THE COMMENTATOR

2018-2019

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*The Commentator is the student newspaper of Yeshiva University.*

*For 84 years, The Commentator has served students and administrators as a communicative conduit; a kinetic vehicle disseminating undergraduate social, religious, and academic beliefs across the student bodies; and a reliable reflection of Yeshiva student life to the broader Jewish and American communities.*

*The Commentator staff claims students spanning the diverse spectrum of backgrounds and beliefs represented at Yeshiva.*

*We are united by our passion for living the ideals of Torah Umadda, and a commitment to journalistic excellence.*

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**1 YU’s “Building Tomorrow, Today” vs. LaGuardia’s “Building Today for a Better Tomorrow” vs. Monsters Inc.’s “Working For a Better Tomorrow, Today” vs. Germantown Presbyterian Church’s “Building Tomorrow Today.”**

Who will win in this epic race of building tomorrow, today for a better today, tomorrow for today’s better tomorrow, today?

**2 Captain Marvel Trailer**

There is nothing more 2018 than opening a trailer with a shot of Blockbuster to show that it takes place in the 90s. #gonebutnotforgotten

**3 Movie Macs**

We actually go by Sheva now, thanks for asking.

**4 Shoe’s Yearbook Photo (1991)**

What have we here, this precious unicorn prancing across fields of no ducks left to give?! No quote, no extracurriculars AND no last name?? SHOE, MY SWEET LOVER BOY, WHO ARE YOU AND WHERE HAVE YOU GONE? How can one Yeshiva College grad be so BOLD and yet so BRAVE?!! Take me into your arms and your LinkedIn network!!!

**5 The TV in the Library Uptown**

Almost as exxxtra as the Commentator Breaking News WhatsApp group.

**6 Face-Plastered Elevators**

We thought a Kedushas Yisroel Chabura ad would’ve been a more timeless visual, but this is still cute.

**7 Constitution Day**

In case you forgot, the Constitution Day event was on October 15th.

**7 UP 7 DOWN**

**1 Pete Davidson and Ariana Grande Breakup**

I am shook. God promised no more floods, yet I have too many tears left to cry from this news. I am questioning everything *yeshiva* day school ever taught me. What if... What if God is a woman after all?

**2 START Science! Emails**

Are you telling me that by joining this club I will get free ice cream, increase my business network, get a job with Goldman Sachs *and* have all my sins forgiven? The only thing that would make this better is if they gave out free Key Food grapes at every event.

**3 No More Sushi Salad Uptown**

The classic YU strategy of getting student input and then doing the exact opposite of what we want.

**4 New Koren Book Honoring Richard Joel**

I didn’t realize that irresponsibly driving YU’s finances into the ground gets you a book of honorary essays, but okay then.

**5 YAF Club Fair Calendar**

A bold move, especially considering the current calendar political climate. Anyone know how to apply to the YU Student Court?

**6 Jesus Picketers in Herald Square**

DISAPPOINTING AND SEXIST. At least the Westboro Baptist Church gave YU good press for being *so* supportive of homosexuality. And what feminist agenda led them to not protest uptown?

**7 Silence**

“The Office of Student Life has conferred with the student leaders and at this time they were not interested in creating a new community minyan. Moving forward, the administration will be working closely with student leaders to find a direction for the wide range of our student body to have a meaningful, vibrant Shabbat experience on the Wilf Campus.” That’s a lot of words to say basically nothing. Man, it must be nice to have a voice.

**Raffle Results**

The Commentator is pleased to announce the results of its recent raffle that was conducted in conjunction with the newspaper's 2018 Midterm Election Poll. Thank you to those who completed the poll, and congratulations to the following winners!

- 1st -- Jacob Mellman (\$75 Amazon gift card)
- 2nd -- Gabby Schottenstein (\$25 Amazon gift card)
- 3rd -- Noa Engle (\$10 Amazon gift card)
- 4th -- Akiva Clair (A mention in next issue's 7up/7down!)

Be sure to keep an eye out for Commentator polls and raffles in the future!

*POLL RESULTS,  
continued from Front Page*

reached out for advice and gave faculty the chance to help them get as close to a representative sample of students as possible,” she explained.

Overall, the poll indicated that 64 percent of YU undergraduate students identify as Republicans or lean Republican, versus 28 percent who identify as Democrats or lean Democratic. YU undergrads similarly tend to lean conservative, with 50 percent of students identifying as somewhat or very conservative versus only 23 percent who are somewhat or very liberal/progressive. Another 22 percent identify as moderate.

The poll found that of YU’s undergraduate populations, the men from Sy Syms School of Business students tend to be more Republican than the other colleges, followed by Yeshiva College, with students from Stern College for Women being the most Democratic overall.

“A majority of YU students lean Republican,” reflected Rachel Zakharov, the President of the YU College Republicans, “and for the first time in a long time we have a unique opportunity to make a difference and Yeshiva University is central to that role.”

*“It is exciting to have some reliable data about the political climate on campus.”*

Professor Silke Aisenbrey

In addition to asking about political leanings, the poll inquired of students’ voting preferences and the extent to which they approve of President Trump, the job that Congress is doing and the recent Kavanaugh confirmation. Men and women differed regarding their support of Kavanaugh’s confirmation and approval of the job President Trump is doing. Despite most undergraduate women leaning Republican, more women disapproved than approved of the Kavanaugh confirmation, and more women disapproved than approved of President Trump.

“I think the conservatism of the campus is expected, considering that this is YU,” said Matthew Haller, the President of the YU College Democrats. “However, in the last few years the College Democrats have mobilized far more students than we thought possible, which goes to show that things aren’t so clear-cut.”

One issue that YU undergraduates generally agree on is the importance of Israel relative to other issues when voting. 74 percent of students consider Israel to be “very” or “extremely” important to them, relative to other issues, when considering who to vote for; only 24 percent say Israel is “somewhat” or “not at all” important relative to other issues. While strong support for Israel remained consistent in results across colleges, there was a partisan divide on this issue within the student body, with students who lean Democratic tending to be less supportive of Israel overall than those who lean Republican.

*For a more detailed breakdown of the poll’s results, please see the article “Commentator 2018 Midterm Election Poll: A Detailed Analysis” on page 9.*



## Sy Syms School of Business Seeks New Dean

By ILAN SASSON

At the beginning of the semester, Yeshiva University published a job posting seeking the next Dean of the Sy Syms School of Business (SSSB).

According to a seven-page brief about the position, the new dean oversees a \$7.6 million annual budget and will be particularly involved in expanding the school's graduate offerings, including its Sunday Executive Masters in Business Administration degree

*"You're a name. We know you.  
You are not a number."*

Syms Interim Dean Michael Strauss

program. The dean is also expected to assist in donor and alumni relations efforts, in addition to shepherding the University through the Association to Advance Collegiate

Schools of Business' continuous improvement review process.

"We want someone who is familiar with the culture of Yeshiva University, familiar with the mission of Yeshiva University and will be able to get people into great graduate schools," said Dr. Moses Pava, SSSB's Honors and Entrepreneurial Leadership Program Director and the Alvin Einbender Professor of Business Ethics, who himself previously served as SSSB Dean.

Another requirement that the University administration seeks from the new Syms Dean is someone who can continue growing the institution as a whole. "Appreciative of the aspirations of a 21st-century business school, the dean will focus not only on the undergraduate majors but also on expanding master's education," Provost Selma Botman said.

To assist in the recruitment process, the University retained Isaacson Miller, a Boston-based executive search firm.

According to Interim Syms Dean Michael Strauss, the plan is for the new dean to begin on July 1, 2019. Accordingly, this academic year will be Strauss' last in his current



Syms Interim Dean Michael Strauss

YESHIVA UNIVERSITY

position. Following the appointment of a new dean, Strauss will become the Associate Dean.

"You're a name. We know you. You are not a number," Strauss said, reflecting on his tenure as Syms Interim Dean. Strauss

specifically told The Commentator about his efforts to reduce class sizes, bolster his availability to students and integrate contemporary Judaic studies into the Syms curriculum.

MODEL UN,  
continued from Front Page

with the participants' "mental health and well-being" in mind and insisting that the decision was absolutely final. Mansdorf refused to respond to The Commentator's email request for official comment.

Yeshiva University Model United Nations, or YUNMUN, is an extracurricular activity run by the Office of Admissions in which high school students roleplay as delegates to the United Nations and simulate UN committees. It serves both as a Model United Nations conference and an admissions event. YU undergraduate students from both campuses are responsible for hiring staff, designing the topics, handling social media and moderating the committees at the conference itself.

Like every topic paper in each committee, delegates are not required to share their own personal beliefs; rather, they are required only to represent the views of the country to which they are assigned — an expectation that is made clear to every school and delegate. The topic paper in question did not ask delegates to debate Yeshiva University's or the greater Modern Orthodox world's approach towards the LGBTQ community. The Office of Admissions informed only the secretariat (YU students who serve as liaisons between the committee chairs and the Office of Admissions) of the decision. Multiple chairs confirmed that they were not consulted about the decision, and they found out through word of mouth.

A letter co-authored by nine chairs, last year's Secretary General and six out of seven student council presidents from both undergraduate campuses was sent to Mansdorf, expressing their displeasure with the decision and requesting that the topic paper be reconsidered for approval. Mansdorf received the letter but refused to reopen the issue.

"The most disappointing element of the decision to not allow the topic of LGBTQ rights to be discussed as a topic at model UN was not the decision itself, but rather the treatment by members of the administration of the chairs," said Judah Stiefel, Chair of the Model UN International Maritime Organization (IMO). "The YUNMUN chairs, who are the some of the most thoughtful and active students on both campuses, voiced their opinions to a member of the admissions department in a carefully worded email, and were met with a curt response. Student leaders took time out of their busy schedules to run Model United Nations and were treated like children by their administration. I feel that the students involved are owed an apology."

Aside from the creation of topic papers, chairs are also responsible for drafting welcome letters to introduce themselves and their committees to the high school delegates. Marder's topic paper included a statement explaining how the UNHRC usually "addresses important human rights issue such as freedom of expression, freedom of religion and LGBT rights." However, the sentence was removed from the welcome letter once the topic paper was rejected.

In response to the decision made by the Office of Admissions, Lilly Gelman, the chair of the Model UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), resigned from her position. "For years, YUNMUN has brought forth similarly sensitive topics such as rape, sexual harassment, sex trafficking, abortion and contraception," said Gelman. "Choosing to specifically ban the discussion of homosexuality from this year's conference after allowing these topics [above] struck me as homophobic and hypocritical. I no longer wanted to represent an institution in which I see discriminatory tendencies at their admissions event."

Another chair, who wished to remain anonymous, asked the Office of Admissions for a meeting to clarify the reason and the process of the rejection, but was denied, with Admissions stating the issue was resolved. However, after threatening to resign unless given a meeting, the Office of Admissions reversed its decision and granted the chair's request. The chair is scheduled to meet with the Office of Admissions this week to discuss the issue further.

"The decision not to include the topic paper was the only responsible choice," said a source close to the decision-making process. "It would have been incorrect and irresponsible to introduce this topic to high school students in the YUNMUN environment. It is a sensitive issue that deserves to be introduced in an appropriately supported environment which allows participants to feel safe and protected."

While Mansdorf similarly maintained that reason for the rejection was always about the

mental health of the high schoolers, multiple chairs confirmed with The Commentator that the initial reason given to them was the concern that day schools and *yeshivas* that do not openly discuss LGBTQ issues might be forced, with this topic paper, to address uncomfortable topics with their Model UN teams, and that the Office of Admissions was uncomfortable asking those schools to do this. According to these chairs, it was only after the aforementioned letter was sent that the reason regarding the delegates' mental health was offered. It is unclear if these two reasons work in parallel with each other and the second reason was stated only at a later date, or if the Office of Admissions changed its position. The above-mentioned letter did not address the issue of the psychological health of the high schoolers.

It also remains unclear why, and which specific parties, removed the phrase "LGBT" from the welcome letter. An examination of several current and past welcome letters indicates that it is common for YUNMUN chairs to give a general overview of topics that their committees address, even if those topics are not specifically discussed at the conference. The Office of Admissions declined to comment on this.

At YUNMUN, each high school is assigned a country to represent, and each committee deals with separate topics based on their jurisdiction. YUNMUN invites Jewish day schools and *yeshivas* from all over the world to participate. The event is held at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Stamford, Connecticut every year in early February.

COED SHABBATON,  
continued from Front Page

and RIETS have been working very closely with Student Organization of Yeshiva (SOY) and YSU to make the Shabbaton a reality. Additionally, SOY President Moshe Spirn and Edmonson have reached out to their counterpart student leaders at the Beren Campus — Stern College Student Council (SCWSC) President Shoshana Marder and Torah Activities Council (TAC) President Adina Cohen — both of whom expressed interest in collaborating to see the Shabbaton

to fruition.

As of now, the Shabbaton is tentatively scheduled for a Shabbat shortly after winter break. The currently proposed weekend is February 15-16, Parashat Tetzaveh, three weeks into the Spring 2018 semester. At least

part of the Shabbaton's programming will take place at the Mount Sinai Jewish Center, a shul in Washington Heights.

Final planning for the Shabbaton involves certain logistics, such as finding Washington Heights housing where women

*"I think that before the end of November, our councils will have made significant progress, and we hope to begin advertising before the end of the fall semester."*

YSU President Nolan Edmonson

undergraduates can be hosted. "We are exploring different ideas including reaching out to current students and alumni living in Washington Heights to see about their ability to host women for a weekend," explained Edmonson. "Once we figure this logistical issue out, I think we'll be closer to sharing a more detailed plan with the student body."

Students can expect further details very soon. "I think that before the end of November," figured Edmonson, "our councils will have made significant progress, and we hope to begin advertising before the end of the fall semester."



## Author Hettie Jones Speaks at YU

By SARA MARCUS

On Oct. 22, the Stern College English Department hosted writer and teacher Hettie Jones to read and speak to students.

Jones is the author of 23 books and poetry collections and teaches at the Graduate Writing Program of The New School. Jones is famous for her biographical writings about her experiences in New York City through the Beatnik movement. She and her then-husband, the African-American poet LeRoi Jones, operated the publishing house Totem Press, which printed works from Beats icons Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg, among others.

Dr. Matt Miller, an Associate Professor of English at SCW, decided to bring Jones to speak at Stern after he assigned her memoir, *How I Became Hettie Jones*, for his American Countercultures course in Spring 2018.

"I thought it was a long-shot, but given how much both I and my students at the time liked her work, I thought it was worth a try bringing her here," Miller wrote in an email. "I was personally blown away...[by the book's] charm, modesty, compassion, candor, and humanity...I have read no better look at the amazing culture of NYC in the 1950s."

Miller described the event as successful, adding that he "heard nothing but great feedback. Ms. Jones..told me how much she enjoyed meeting students at Stern. She de-

*"I thought it was a long-shot, but given how much both I and my students at the time liked her work, I thought it was worth a try bringing her here."*

SCW English Professor Dr. Matt Miller

For a little over an hour, Jones read several of her poems from her three poetry collections. Afterward, she took questions from students. Jones spoke candidly about being a mother to biracial children before the Civil Rights Movement, her friendships with artists such as sculptor Helene Dorn, her Jewish identity, and the importance of a positive outlook as a way to thrive as an individual and artist. Jones added speaking at an all-women's college was a first for her, and that she enjoyed the environment, which reminded her of her own all-women college experience.

scribed the student body as charming and engaged. She was also delighted by many of the questions asked her at the event. She praised the questions as well informed and relevant."

Students who attended shared the same enthusiasm as Jones. Sarah Casteel (SCW '19) said she "loved" the experience. "[Jones] was hysterical, witty, interesting and inspiring," she added.

Sarah Ben-Nun (SCW '19), who read Jones's memoir while in Miller's American Countercultures class, said hearing from and speaking to Jones was an "honor and a privilege and I gained so much from [her]."



Hettie Jones

## Wilf Campus Undergraduate Student Government Election Results; Student Court To Rule on Eligibility of 2 Candidates

By LEIB WIENER

Wilf student council elections were held on Oct.17 for the positions of YSU Junior, Sophomore and Freshman Representatives, as well as YCSA Treasurer. On Oct. 18, SOY elections were held for the positions of SOY BMP Vice President and SOY IBC Vice President. These are the results of each election:

**YSU Junior Representative:** Elliot Dosetareh  
**YSU Sophomore Representative:** Zachary Greenberg  
**YSU Freshman Representative:** Michael Stark

**SOY BMP Vice President:** David Nissanoff  
**SOY IBC Vice President:** Eli Weiss

Regarding the election for YSCA Treasurer, it was deemed that the two potential candidates running for Treasurer were constitutionally ineligible for the position. According to Daniel Ritholtz, Canvassing Committee Chair, "one of the candidates was deemed ineligible because he was a sophomore running for a position that can only be held by a junior or senior, while the other candidate was running for a position in Yeshiva College, while he is enrolled in Sy Syms School of Business." Both of these ineligibilities can be found in Article II, Section V, Sub-Section 7 of the Wilf Campus Constitution. The Office of Student Life, which provides the list of approved candidates and then sends them to the Canvassing Committee, committed the oversight.

Additionally, SOY elections are usually held on the same day as YSU elections, but this year they were held a day after, causing some additional confusion.

In order to decide how to best approach both situations, the student government general assembly met on Tuesday,

Oct. 23 to select members to a student court. They selected Dovid Schwartz as chief justice, and Benjamin Atwood, Samuel Gelman, Benjamin Strachman, and Daniel Yellin as justices.

In an email sent to the student body on Thursday, Oct. 25, the justices explained that YSU and YCSA "submitted a petition against the Wilf Campus Canvassing Committee in regards to a dispute over the recent election for the position of YCSA Secretary/Treasurer." The email stated that YSU and YCSA request that the disputed candidate is removed from his position and instruct the "Canvassing Committee to hold a special election for the position so that eligible students might run for the position."

After deliberation, the court has agreed to hear the case of YSU v. Canvassing Committee but will not be holding a public trial. Instead the court "will be releasing a summary judgment on the matter" within "[c]onstitutionally mandated 15-day period for hearing and releasing an opinion on a case heard."

The last student council hearing on May 10, 2017, Rubinstein vs. Canvassing Committee, ruled in favor of David Rubinstein, who requested that student council election results from April be released by the Office of Student Life and Canvassing Committee after the student body voted on an amendment during those April elections to release election results.

The Office of Student Life declined to comment.

Below is the official statement of YSU President Nolan Edmonson, SYMS President Brandon Emalfarb, SOY President Moshe Spirn, YCSA President Amitai Miller, and Canvassing Committee Chair Daniel Ritholtz:

**Joint statement from the Student Council and the Canvassing Committee. For immediate release:**

In this fall's election cycle, there were a number of issues

with the candidate approval process and the voting ballot process. Those issues included the approval of two candidates to run for YCSA Treasurer who were not eligible to run for that position and SOY elections being held on the day after the election of YSU/YCSA positions, when traditionally they have been held on the same day.

These issues were indeed oversights by the Office of Student Life, the Canvassing Committee and student councils, and we are pursuing a course of action to rectify this issue. Pursuant with Article XI of the Wilf Campus Constitution, the General Assembly will convene no later than next Tuesday to appoint members to the Student Court. After this, the Court will enact its power (as outlined in Article II, Section X, Subsection 5 of the Wilf Campus Constitution) to remove any "ineligible" student leaders from office.

If the Student Court sees fit, the Canvassing Committee will hold new elections and allow students who so please to run for open positions.

The students who were voted for but otherwise ineligible to hold their elected positions have been informed by the Canvassing Committee.

We apologize to the candidates whom this oversight has impacted and to the wider student body. The student councils and Canvassing Committee are taking steps to prevent similar issues from happening in future elections.

Respectfully,  
 Nolan Edmonson, YSU President  
 Brandon Emalfarb, SYMS President  
 Moshe Spirn, SOY President  
 Amitai Miller, YCSA President  
 Daniel Ritholtz, Canvassing Committee Chair



# Plaza Jewish Community Chapel

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## SCW English Dept. Hosts Panel on the Value of Humanities

By MICHELLE NAIM

The English Department of Stern College for Women held a panel entitled “The Value of the Humanities” on October 17. The event was moderated by Meirah Shedlo, a SCW academic advisor and alumna.

Of the panelists, one of the most notable was Dr. Paula M. Krebs, the executive director of the Modern Language Association (MLA). Other panelists included Jacob Wisse, Professor of Art History at SCW and Director of the Yeshiva University Museum. Many alumni were also featured in the panel.

In an email to The Commentator, Dr. Ann Peters, a SCW literature professor, explained

that SCW English Chair Dr. Linda Shires spearheaded the idea for the panel this past summer. After this, Peters and Shedlo began planning the logistics of the event together.

To begin, Shedlo asked the panelists to define the humanities. Head of the MLA, Dr. Krebs, explained that the humanities are about “meaning and putting meanings together”. Her explanation included the fact that the humanities do not concern being a humanitarian, or helping people, but are rather about the way humans have analyzed and made meaning of things that other humans create. Yarmus added that the humanities are essentially about “finding the soul of us.”

One student, Rachel Haber (SCW ‘19),

asked the question many students had on their minds: How do we, as humanities majors, answer our parents, or anyone, who questions our decision to major in this field?

Dr. Krebs touched upon the fear that many humanities majors have about not finding a job. She remarked that “you’re not going to love to learn if you don’t love what you’re learning. The jobs you’ll have in 10 years don’t exist, there’s no sense in preparing for it! You learn on the job.” According to Simi Lobell, a writer and producer, “Mediocrity isn’t going to do it in any field. So [if someone asks you] “why are you doing this?” [The answer is] because you’re good at it”.

In a private interview after the panel with Dr. Paula M. Krebs, Director of the MLA, Dr.

Krebs wanted to make sure that people knew the responsibility humanities faculty have towards their students: “We have a problem: that humanities faculty do not convey to their students what business faculty say to their students. [Why, you might ask?] Because humanities faculty have only ever been humanities faculty.” When asked why she believes humanities majors have lost in the job market, she said, “I think it’s hard for us not to get things right. Scientists are more used to that. We [humanities majors] like perfect papers.” Her ultimate point: We have to learn it is okay to fail.





# YU Buys Billboard on Route 4 in NJ

By SARAH RUSSMAN

Yeshiva University recently purchased a large billboard on Route 4 East in Bergen County, New Jersey, a heavily-traversed highway leading to the George Washington Bridge and Manhattan.

The billboard, which features two students and the university's new marketing slogan, "Building tomorrow, today,"

Senior Director of Communications Mechal Haas said, "Our focus is towards a more disruptive media with the aim of breaking through ad clutter — represents a key shift vs. last year."

Haas declined to share the cost of the billboard.

According to Haas, the purpose of the billboard and broader marketing campaign at large is "[t]o build top of mind awareness and

frequency." Haas noted that "anecdotal feedback has been remarkably favorable."

Some students surveyed disagreed. "It is a misappropriation of their resources since people don't make education-level decisions

based on billboard advertisements," said Ari Roffe (YC '21).

"In my opinion it is innovative; however, it seems that our resources can be used more effectively," said Shira Perton (SCW '19). "YU is not at a loss in terms of students

enrolling. [Other marketing efforts] would seem more effective than a billboard on a highway that has a huge mix of people who largely are not Jewish, so [they] would not be interested in Yeshiva University," Perton added.

*"It is a misappropriation of their resources since people don't make education-level decisions based on billboard advertisements."*

Ari Roffe



Yeshiva University Route 4 Billboard Being Installed

THE COMMENTATOR

tomorrow, today," is part of a broader marketing campaign YU has embarked upon this academic year. Last month, the university took out two full-page color ads in the Wall Street Journal in a single week.

When asked about the increased advertising spending this year, YU's

strengthen the reputation of YU among key prospects (students, parents, employers, alumni) in the critical messaging area — great jobs, academic excellence, vibrant life on campus, and overall value." Specifically, the billboard "is part of an assortment of consumer touchpoint to maximize reach and

# Paid, Off-Duty Officers Bolster YU Security

By YOSEF LEMEL

In an effort to increase security on campus, Yeshiva University has been participating in the New York City Police Dept.'s Paid Detail Program for an unspecified period of time.

*"It's definitely a step in the right direction towards limiting — and eventually preventing — anti-Semitism on campus, especially after recent incidents in YU residencies."*

Akiva Poppers

According to the NYPD, the program "allows New York City police officers to perform off-duty uniformed security work within New York City." The university pays \$41 an hour to have an off-duty uniformed police officer or detective on campus, in addition to a 10 percent administrative charge, bringing the total hourly rate per officer to \$45.10. While officers are empowered to enforce laws, they are not permitted to issue summonses for low-level offenses, such as marijuana possession or public urination.

"Student safety is of utmost importance," said YU's Senior Director of Communications Mechal Haas. "We have a longstanding partnership with the NYPD paid detail unit

and work closely with them to address the needs on campus."

Haas did not respond to The Commentator's inquiries regarding how long YU has employed off-duty NYPD officers.

A YU-employed security guard, who commented on the condition

of anonymity, praised the arrangement. "This makes our job much easier," the guard said. "If a criminal sees a cop in uniform with a gun, that will stop him from committing a crime." The guard further stated that an off-duty officer is frequently posted on 187th

Street between the hours of 5 p.m. and 1 a.m. due to criminal activity in the vicinity. Haas declined to comment on deployment matters, citing security concerns.

Students such as Akiva Poppers (SSSB '22) have noticed and appreciate the university's use of off-duty

officers to beef up security.

"It's definitely a step in the right direction towards limiting — and eventually preventing — anti-Semitism on campus, especially after recent incidents in YU residencies," Poppers said, referring to the recent swastika incidents.



NYPD Cops

NEW YORK CITY POLICE DEPT.



## SCDS to Receive Academic Credit for Fall Production

By COMMENTATOR STAFF

For the first time in Yeshiva University history, members of the Stern College Dramatics Society (SCDS) will be receiving academic credit for working on their fall production, Associate Dean of Stern College for Women Ethel Orlian recently confirmed in an email.

Actresses and crew members in SCDS' fall production who complete the required hours and academic supplements will have the option to enroll in a 2-credit course entitled "Play Production." SCDS will be performing Ken Ludwig's comedy, "The Game's Afoot (or Holmes for the Holidays)" on December 16, 17, 19 and 20.

"The course will offer students a formal structure within which to study topics such as the function of theater technicians, costume design, role interpretation and acting and all areas relating to play production," said Orlian. "The course requires practical experience which will be met by participation in the Dramatics Society Production."

This win for SCDS follows a years-long battle with the YU Administration, in which SCDS repeatedly petitioned for the chance to earn academic credit for those heavily involved in their annual production. Members of the Yeshiva College Dramatics Society (YCDS) were granted the option for credit in 1973 after a member of the society made a formal request to Dean Isaac Bacon. Since then, both societies evolved on parallel paths until the start of the 2017 school year, when YCDS joined SCDS in being placed under the auspices of student life (YCDS was formerly run under the jurisdiction of the Dean's Office). However, YCDS members still received credit for their work on the fall production last year while SCDS members did not, despite the practically identical nature of the societies.

An editorial published in The Commentator last fall called out the university for its latest rebuttal to SCDS and highlighted the issues with refusing them credit, including the effect such a disparity has on the reputation of the societies and the university. The editorial was allegedly read

by various higher-ups in the YU administration, including the Provost.

Shortly after, members of SCDS reached out to Dean Orlian with a renewed request for credit. After multiple meetings and a vote from the academic committee, the new course was approved and created.

"This is a win many years in the making," remarked Shoshy Ciment, the current president of SCDS and the author of the aforementioned editorial. "I am beyond ecstatic to be leading SCDS during such an exciting time."

For many current and past members of SCDS, the past few years have been particularly exhilarating. SCDS gained access to the Schottenstein Theater uptown in 2017 after years of performing in various makeshift venues since the selling of the Beren Campus theater in 2012. After receiving access to the uptown theater, gaining credit for its members was the natural next step for the board of SCDS.

"As soon as I was able to comprehend that this dream had finally become a reality, tears just immediately began streaming down my cheeks," remarked Jordyn Kaufman, a former SCDS president who was instrumental in obtaining the Schottenstein Theater for the women in 2017. "This has been such a long time coming and for me it was something that I really wanted that I wasn't able to achieve in my time."

*"This is a win many years in the making. I am beyond ecstatic to be leading SCDS during such an exciting time."*

— SCDS President Shoshy Ciment

"I hope students can feel empowered by our story," said Liorah Rubinstein, another former SCDS president. "It's one thing to want to see changes and continue the lamentations of years; it's another to take the responsibility of making it happen."

## YU Brothers Resuscitate Heart Attack Victim

By YITZCHAK CARROLL

A duo of brothers who attend Yeshiva University resuscitated a 64-year-old man who had crashed into a highway median on Oct. 7.

Ariel (SSSB '19) and Yoni Sacknovitz (YC '21), who are both certified emergency medical technicians, were driving home from a New York Jets

game northbound on New Jersey Route 17, when they noticed a Hyundai Kona pulled over on the side of the road, having crashed into the median. Ariel, who was driving, immediately pulled their car over and rushed to go help. After noticing the driver was unconscious and unresponsive, the brothers — along with other medical professionals who passed by — broke a window and extricated the patient from the vehicle.

Yoni began chest compressions while Ariel

oxygenated the man with a bag-valve mask. A paramedic unit arrived several minutes later with a defibrillator and administered a shock, causing the patient — who had suffered a heart attack — to regain consciousness. The man, a resident of New Windsor, New York, was then transported to a local hospital and has since recovered.

Ariel, 22, a Business Intelligence and Marketing Analytics major at the Syms School of Business, volunteers with Hatzalah of Washington Heights.

Yoni, 20, a Biology major, worked for SeniorCare Emergency Medical Services, a private ambulance company, this past summer. Both aspire to attend medical school after graduation.

"We were glad we were able to help," Yoni said.

"We were glad we were in the right place at the right time," said Ariel, who noted that he had the equipment on hand necessary to revive the man, courtesy of Hatzalah. "This is what we were trained for," he added.



The emergency scene

YONI SACKNOVITZ



# Commentator 2018 Midterm Election Poll: A Detailed Analysis

By **AVI HIRSCH** and  
**BENJAMIN KOSLOWE**

Last week, The Commentator conducted a political poll of current Yeshiva University undergraduates in advance of the United States 2018 midterm elections. In this article, we present a detailed breakdown of our results.

### INTRODUCTION

Overall, the poll surveyed 334 undergraduate YU students, or 17 percent of the total undergraduate student body. We found that 64 percent of YU undergraduate students identify as Republicans or lean Republican, versus 28 percent who identify as Democrats or lean Democratic. YU undergrads similarly tend to lean conservative, with 50 percent of students identifying themselves as somewhat or very conservative versus only 23 percent who are somewhat or very liberal/progressive. Another 22 percent identify as moderate.

133 respondents (40 percent) were Yeshiva College students, 59 (18 percent) were Syms-Men students, 122 (37 percent) were Stern College students and 19 (6 percent) were Syms-Women students. (Since so few Syms-Women students responded, our analysis will not devote specific attention to that school.)

Our poll found that Syms-Men students tend to be more Republican than the other colleges, followed by YC, with Stern being the most Democratic overall. 86 percent of Syms-Men, 65 percent of YC and 55 percent of Stern students identify as Republicans or lean Republican. Only 7 percent of Syms-Men students identify as Democrats or lean Democratic, compared to 28 percent of YC and 37 percent of Stern students. Overall, 71 percent of undergraduate men and 55 percent of undergraduate women identify as Republicans or lean Republican, while 21 percent of undergraduate men and 38 percent of undergraduate women identify as Democrats or lean Democratic.

Political views in general aligned similarly, with Syms-Men being the most conservative of the colleges, followed by YC, and then Stern. 69 percent of Syms-Men, 54 percent of YC and 39 percent of Stern students

identify themselves as “somewhat” or “very” conservative, while only 3 percent of Syms-Men, 20 percent of YC, and 34 percent of Stern students are “somewhat” or “very” liberal/progressive.

The poll found very similar results for other questions. When asked which party they wanted to win control of Congress and whether they would vote for their district’s Republican or Democratic candidate for the U.S. House of Representatives, a vast majority of Syms-Men students, followed by a smaller majority of YC students and followed by a less than 50 percent plurality of Stern students answered Republican.

37 percent of YC, 56 percent of Syms-Men and 29 percent of Stern students feel that the nation is on the right track, versus 41 percent of YC, 24 percent of Syms-Men and 45 percent of Stern students who feel that the nation is on the wrong track.

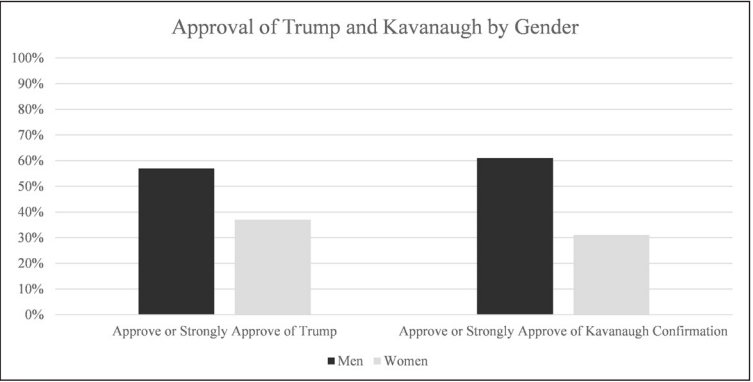
### TRUMP/KAVANAUGH/ CONGRESS

While sentiment on President Trump’s job performance and approval of Justice Kavanaugh’s confirmation reflected the conservative lean of the student body, views on Congress’s performance were more divided. 48 percent of students approve or strongly approve of the job Donald Trump is doing as president, versus 31 percent who disapprove or strongly disapprove. Similarly, 49 percent

and another 26 percent neither approve nor disapprove.

Men and women differed regarding their support of Kavanaugh’s confirmation and approval of the job President Trump is doing. Despite most undergraduate women leaning Republican, more women disapproved than approved of the Kavanaugh confirmation. Overall, 61 percent of undergraduate men and 31 percent of undergraduate women either approve or strongly approve of the confirmation, while 24 percent of undergraduate men and 45 percent of undergraduate women either disapprove or strongly disapprove of the confirmation. Similarly, 57 percent of undergraduate men approve or strongly approve of President Trump, and 24 percent either disapprove or strongly disapprove; on the other hand, only 37 percent of undergraduate women approve of the president, compared to 40 percent who disapprove.

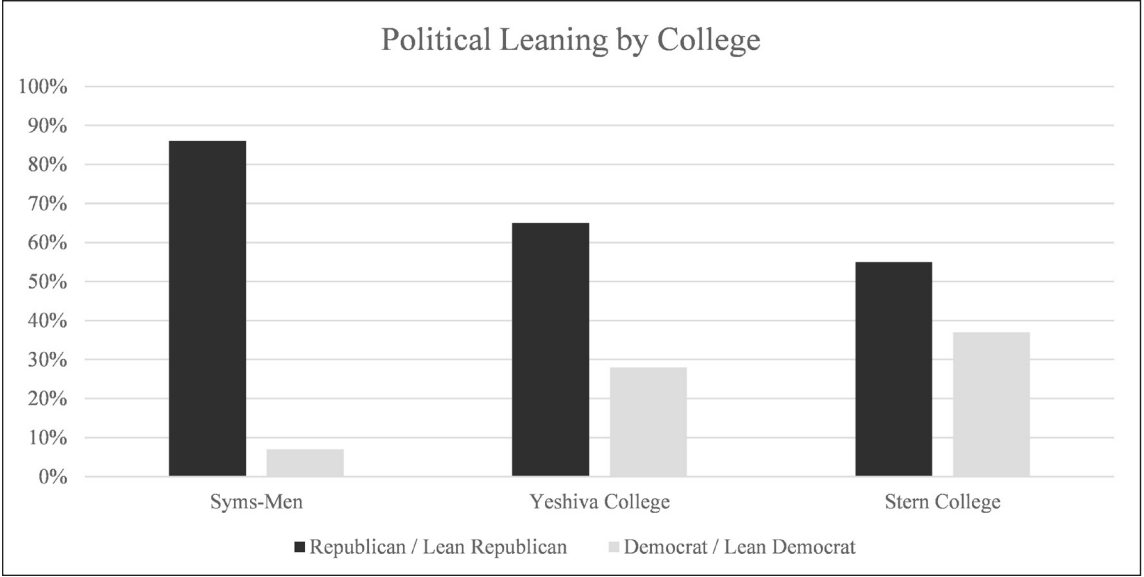
The poll indicated overall support of Congress to be low across all undergraduate colleges, with more men approving than disapproving, and more women disapproving than approving. Overall, 36 percent of undergraduate men and 16 percent of undergraduate women either approve or strongly approve of the job Congress is doing, while 27 percent of undergraduate men and 28 percent of undergraduate women either disapprove or strongly disapprove.



of students approve or strongly approve of Brett Kavanaugh being confirmed to serve on the U.S. Supreme Court, versus 33 percent who disapprove or strongly disapprove. However, only 28 percent approve or strongly approve of the job Congress is doing; 27 percent disapprove or strongly disapprove,

### DIRECTION OF THE NATION

The poll also found that YU undergraduate students are generally split about the direction the nation is heading in, with 40 percent thinking the nation is heading on the wrong track and 37 percent thinking it is on the right track.



Undergraduate men and women are similarly divided on this question, with 43 percent of undergraduate men and 28 percent of undergraduate women feeling that the nation is on the right track versus 36 percent of undergraduate men and 46 percent of undergraduate women thinking it is on the wrong track.

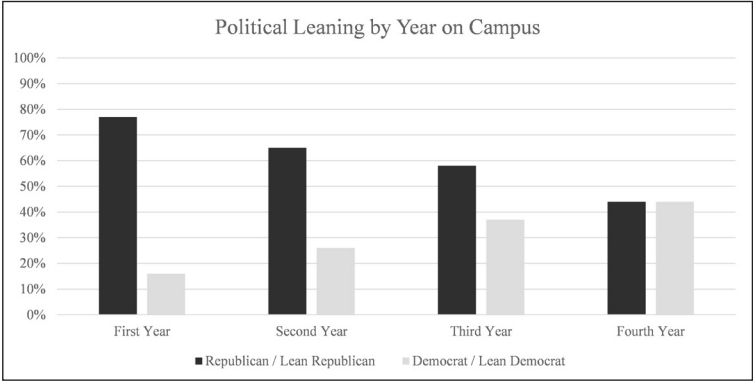
### ISRAEL

Overall, YU students consistently prioritize Israel significantly above other issues when voting. 74 percent of students consider Israel to be “very” or “extremely” important to them, relative to other issues, when considering who to vote for; only 24 percent say Israel is “somewhat” or “not at all” important relative to other issues. This breakdown remained consistent when comparing opinions across colleges, with at least 68 percent of students from each college considering Israel to be “very” or “extremely” important to them.

There was, however, a sharp partisan divide on this issue within the student body. Among students who identify as Republicans or lean Republican, 87 percent view Israel as “extremely” or “very” important; only 53 percent of those who identify as Democrats or who lean Democratic say the same.

### BY YEAR

Breaking down our results by year, we found that overall, younger undergraduate students at YU tend



to be notably more conservative than older students. 77 percent of first year students identify as Republicans or lean Republican, compared to 65 percent of students in their second year, 58 percent of third years and only 44 percent of fourth years. Democrats and those leaning Democratic comprised 16 percent of first years, 26 percent of second years, 37 percent of third years and 44 percent of fourth years. Political leanings followed a similar pattern, with 66 percent of first year students identifying as “somewhat” or “very” conservative compared to 50 percent of second years, 42 percent of third years and 31 percent of fourth years. We found that support for Kavanaugh and President Trump followed a similar trend, with younger students tending to be more supportive of them than older students.

(Note that although only 10 percent of poll respondents were in their fourth year, the fact that older students were generally less conservative across the board certainly lends legitimacy to the existence of

a trend that extends to students in their fourth year.)

We found a similar breakdown by age. Of respondents who identify as Republicans or who lean Republican, 30 percent were between 17 and 19 years old and 42 percent were between 21 and 23 years old. On the other hand, Democrats and those who lean Democratic tended to be older, with only 15 percent of respondents between 17 and 19 years old and almost 60 percent between 21 and 23 years old.

### METHODOLOGY

Before conducting our poll, we reached out to Professors Silke Aisenbrey and Daniel Kimmel, who advised us on methodology to get the most accurate and representative results possible. We reached out to students via email and social media, as well as through their professors, gathering a total of 400 interested undergraduate students from Yeshiva College, Stern College for Women, Sy Syms School of Business (Men) and Sy Syms School of Business (Women). We conducted a raffle with a \$75 Amazon gift card first place prize to motivate respondents. Before opening the poll to these students, we reviewed all respondents with the Wilf Campus Office of Student Life to ensure that they were all current undergraduate students and to eliminate duplicates. 334 students completed our poll over the following three days.

Poll respondents were highly distributed among different majors. Of the 334 respondents, 17 percent are majoring in biology, and no more than 9 percent are majoring in any one other field. Respondents were distributed over more than 30 different majors.

Several confounding factors could have skewed our results in one direction. For example, Syms-Men constitutes 27 percent of total YU undergraduate students but only 18 percent of poll respondents. Because Syms-Men was underrepresented in our poll compared to YC and Stern and tended to be more conservative than the other colleges, it is reasonable to conclude that our results were, in general, *less* conservative than the true political views of YU as a whole. Additionally, because only 6 percent of our respondents attend Syms-Women (comprising 12 percent of the college) and 10 percent of our respondents are in their fourth year, we refrained from drawing conclusions from these data sets.



# Yeshiva University Counseling Center Reports Promising Growth

By SURI LIPSKY

The Yeshiva University Counseling Center plays a vital role in the robust atmosphere of student life on campus. The center is comprised of eight full- and part-time therapists as well as one psychiatrist and two psychiatry residents. The center provides easily accessible psychological and psychiatric counseling to any student in need, at absolutely no charge. According to Counseling Center Director Dr. Yael Muskat and Associate Director Dr. Debra Alper, the center is showing promising growth in usage across the Beren and Wilf campuses, with numbers up 5-10 percent since 2010. For the last several years, approximately 22-25 percent of undergraduate students have used the Counseling Center for services, which is an increase from the 15-20 percent of the undergraduate student population that visited in 2010.

*For the last several years, approximately 22-25% of undergraduate students have used the Counseling Center for services, which is an increase from the 15-20% of the undergraduate student population that visited in 2010.*

When asked about potential factors leading to this increase, Muskat suggested a number of possible factors, remarking that students “are often insightful and aware of their own needs, and are ready to seek the help that is available. More and more, students are shedding the old stigmas about therapy and mental health. Today’s YU student body is sophisticated. Students rightly view their mental health as another component of their overall well-being, and treat it as such.”

Muskat emphasized that the dedicated therapists and psychologists who staff the center are devoted to the wellbeing of the students, and want them to know of the center as a valuable resource. With various initiatives and a number of outreach programs — including tables, groups, workshops, and partnership with RAs and other student leaders — the staff have made great efforts over the years to make the center known and accessible to students. The center is also closely involved in the dynamics of student-led campus life, regularly coordinating activities and workshops with student run organizations such as Active Minds, a club dedicated the promotion of mental health.

SCW ‘15 alumna Rivka Lubin utilized the Counseling Center during her time on campus, and recalls passionately the benefit of receiving guidance and counseling to facilitate her personal success at Stern. “Dr. Yael Muskat was incredible. She was invested in

my situation since I first walked into Stern and helped me more than I can describe... I also got so much help from Dr. Koren and to say thank you wouldn’t be enough to show how grateful I am,” said Lubin. She reflected that the Counseling Center was a crucial tool in maintaining emotional and mental wellbeing while facing the challenges of college life. Three years after Lubin’s graduation, it appears that the Counseling Center continues to be an accessible and important tool for the growing number of students who seek



What the counseling center can help with.

professional guidance during their college years.

Lubin’s advice to anyone who is struggling or considering seeking guidance is “to reach out — not for other people, but for yourself. If you notice that you don’t feel right, or that something is wrong, don’t stay silent... In order to succeed you need to take care of yourself physically and emotionally.” She noted that “it can be scary to admit you need help and to let others in on your most personal thoughts and emotions... but believe me, it can make all the difference.”

Dr. Muskat and all of the committed professionals who work at the Counseling Center want the students to know that the Center is intended to be both a tool and a refuge, and is there for anyone who needs it. “We want all students to know that we are here for them,” Muskat remarked. “We love the work we do at YU and are committed to the success of all our students. No problem is too big or too small. If a student is thinking about making an appointment but is unsure if counseling is the right step for them, we encourage them

to call, email, or stop in to meet us.”

To contact the Beren or Wilf Counseling Center or set up an appointment, students can email [counseling@yu.edu](mailto:counseling@yu.edu) or call [Beren: (646) 592-4210; Wilf: (646) 592-4200]. Locations of either campus’ Counseling Center facilities are located below. Both campuses’ centers are in operation Monday-Thursday from 9:00am to 5:00pm and Friday from 9:00am to 2:00pm. In the event of an emergency or crisis outside hours of operation, students are advised to contact emergency services by dialing 911, calling Hatzalah at (212) 230-1000 or calling campus security [Beren: (212) 340-7709; Wilf: (212) 960-5200].

Wilf Campus Counseling Center  
500 West 185th Street  
Furst Hall, Suite 520  
Beren Campus Counseling Center  
205 Lexington Avenue  
Suite 401  
(between East 32nd & East 33rd Streets)

## GPATS After Brander

By SAMUEL GELMAN (HOUSTON, TEXAS)

When Rabbi Kenneth Brander, former Vice President for University and Community Life at Yeshiva University, left to become President and Rosh haYeshiva at Ohr Torah Stone in Israel, the vacancy created by his departure was not filled. Instead, Yeshiva University decided to assign the positions to current YU administrators; Vice President Josh Joseph took over Student Life while Rabbi Berman took over the Center for the Jewish Future and YU Israel. GPATS, the Graduate Program In Advanced Talmudic Studies For Women, however, was left in partial limbo.

“Rabbi Berman and I are working on that [hiring a visionhead],” said Rabbi Brander in an interview with The Observer from October 2017.

“As someone who was exceptionally devoted to the mission and execution of GPATS, I think we were all curious to see how the program would evolve without [Rabbi Brander’s] leadership,” said Talia Molotsky, the current GPATS Program Manager.

However, even before Rabbi Brander left, the staff of GPATS mobilized to ensure that the program would have a stable and bright future ahead. This included getting the necessary commitments for the financial stability of the program.

“We had a meeting with President Berman at the time that Rabbi Brander had made it official that he was leaving and he assured us that GPATS is here to stay and he

would see to it that there would be funding,” said Rabbi Moshe Kahn, a Talmud rabbi at GPATS who has taught there since its founding. “Whatever concern initially we might have had when we found out that Rabbi Brander was leaving, I feel President Berman assured us, and I’m taking him at his word, that he is very committed to GPATS, and he made it very clear to us that the funding will be provided for GPATS.”

The fundraising is conducted by the Office of Institutional Advancement, with President Berman and Provost Dr. Selma Botman, with assistance from her Chief of Staff, Stu Halpern, leading the charge.

“Rabbi Berman is a major fan of our program and wants our program to exist and, therefore, Yeshiva University supports our program and is going to be raising money for our program,” said Professor Nechama Price, Director of GPATS.

*“It 100% not only matched my expectations but superseded them”*

—  
Zahava Schwartz

According to Price, Botman also took on all of Rabbi Brander’s previous responsibilities. Neither Price nor Botman would clarify what these exact responsibilities are, with Price only saying that “she is in charge of the program. So, in theory, everything that Rabbi Brander did, that is what she does now. She is responsible for overseeing the



GPATS

YESHIVA UNIVERSITY

entire program.”

It is unclear if Botman is filling the role of the “visionhead” that Rabbi Brander referred to, as Rabbi Brander could not be reached for comment. Price declined to comment on the matter. President Berman did not offer comment on the leadership, only saying that “deep Jewish learning is essential for empowering our students to spread positive Jewish values to the world. We are working to grow post-college opportunities for women at YU to grow in their Torah studies in the most advanced settings.”

Botman did not offer comment on the specific finances of GPATS, only stating that “Nechama Price, the Office of Institutional Advancement and I are all working closely together to ensure the financial sustainability of GPATS.” However, the program did raise \$84,489 in the #YUHero campaign, more than the Center for the Jewish Future, Sy

Syms School of Business and the Bernard Revel Graduate School of Jewish Studies each individually raised.

Dean Karen Bacon, Mordechai D. Katz and Dr. Monique C. Katz Dean of the Undergraduate Faculty of Arts and Sciences at Yeshiva University, is also involved in GPATS. Price commented that since the program takes place in the Beit Midrash of Stern College, Bacon “is, therefore, someone who is available to advise me if I need to speak to her about something or the students.” Though it is unclear what responsibilities fall exactly under Bacons’ purview, Price expressed that the dean is “very supportive of the GPATS program.”

As for Price, she is more engaged in the day-to-day operations of the program,

*Continued on Page 13*



## FROM THE COMMIE ARCHIVES

**Editor's Note:** The Commentator has decided to reprint the following editorials and op-ed that were published in The Commentator during election seasons over the years. These articles are illuminating not only in what they reveal about Yeshiva students' political opinions from decades ago, but also in the way in which they call attention to the dramatic shifts in Orthodox political opinion since then.

## From the Archives (November 6, 1940; Volume 6 Issue 3) — Editorial: Green Light

By EPHRAIM F. MANDELCORN and THE  
COMMENTATOR GOVERNING BOARD OF  
1940-41

Franklin D. Roosevelt has been reelected. The cheering and the whistling have by now already abated. The jubilant crowds have long since ceased their raucous enthusiasm for the momentous bulletin that spelled victory for the Democratic party. They have already dispersed and had the benefit of several hours' sleep. Now, then, let us see precisely what we have. The die is cast—let us see what it yields.

Firstly, the closeness of the race and the comparatively equal division of the voting population between the two major candidates show quite conclusively the strength of the tradition against the third term in the mind of the masses of Americans. Had this not been a third term candidacy, the difference in popular backing would doubtless have been much more decisive.

By the same token, however, the very critical emergency of the times must have prompted many temporarily to dismiss such a prejudice from their minds in favor of an expertly trained hand at the helm of the state.

Thus the general approval of the foreign and domestic program of the incumbent administration should actually far exceed what the actual ballots indicate.

The verdict of the people, then, and the approval implied in the circumstance of the election have given the New Deal what the President has termed "the vindication of the principles and policies on

which we have fought this campaign."

The voters have given the Administration the green light—the signal to go ahead. But, the road is strictly a one-way road. The preference is based mainly on past performance and it is the expectation of the continuance of this record that decided who should win.

The newly-constituted Congress will remember that the social and economic progress made during the last eight years has won the favor of the majority of the voters. This majority has expressed itself in favor of the farm program initiated under the New Deal; it has applauded the regulation of business by the people's government and chiefly it has asked for the continued raising of the living standards of labor. And it is this particularly which will require most careful treatment.

For, the temptation to undo some of the historic gains on behalf of labor in the interest of the seemingly greater enterprise of national defense will be great. Retreat from the advancements gained by maximum hour and minimum wage standards may to some appear expedient and necessary under the stress of the times and some may find an opportune moment to rescind these gains.

But, the people have dictated the policy, and they have given their government but one mandate—that of going ahead on the road to a still better standard of living.

The people have sanctioned the policy of helping the needy as it is incorporated in the institutions of social security, relief, unemployment insurance, NYA, CCC and their like. This, then, is to be the cue for the newly elected government. This is its mandate. This is its signal to proceed—its green light.

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THE COMMENTATOR

### The Commentator

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### Green Light

Franklin D. Roosevelt has been reelected. The cheering and the whistling have by now already abated. The jubilant crowds have long since ceased their raucous enthusiasm for the momentous bulletin that spelled victory for the Democratic party. They have already dis-

in favor of an expertly trained hand at the helm of the state.

Thus the general approval of the foreign and domestic program of the incumbent administration should actually far exceed what the actual ballots indicate.

The verdict of the people, then, and the approval implied in the circumstance of the election have given the New Deal what the President has termed "the vindication of the principles and policies on which we have fought this campaign."

The voters have given the Administration the green light—the signal to go ahead. But, the road is strictly a one-way road. The preference is based mainly on past performance and it is the expectation of the continuance of this record that decided who should win.

The newly-constituted Congress will remember that the social and economic progress made during the last eight years has won the favor of the majority of the voters. This majority has expressed itself in favor of the farm program initiated under the New Deal; it has applauded the regulation of business by the people's government and chiefly it has asked for the continued raising of the living standards of labor. And it is this particularly which will require most careful treatment.

For, the temptation to undo some of the historic gains in behalf of labor in the interest of the seemingly greater enterprise of national defense will be great. Retreat from the advancements gained

THE COMMENTATOR

The Commentator Archives

## From the Archives (September 30, 1948; Volume 14 Issue 1) — Editorial: Liberals Unite!

By MAX FRANKEL and THE  
COMMENTATOR GOVERNING  
BOARD OF 1948-49

After careful consideration of the present political situation, we have decided to

support Mr. Truman's candidacy. That does not mean that we agree with Mr. Truman; as a matter of fact we are much more partial to many of Mr. Wallace's ideas.

But we are not voting in a popularity contest. We are voting in an election. And it is a characteristic of American elections that there are only two candidates with any

prospects of success. Support of a Liberal splinter-party candidate serves only to advance the political fortunes of the more conservative of the leading contenders, a purpose to which we can hardly subscribe.

We, we would like to make it clear, are liberals. We are not A.D.A. liberals. We are not P.C.A. liberals. We are liberals. As such we

cannot but look with distaste at anything that tends to split the liberals. Mr. Wallace obviously fits into this classification. For as long as Mr. Wallace prevents his followers from joining their fellow-liberals, the liberal cause is severely, if not critically, handicapped.

Under the circumstances, our duty, and the duty of all true liberals, is clear.

## From the Archives (October 29, 1952; Volume 18 Issue 2) — Yeshiva Student Body Prefers Stevenson 16-1, Survey Shows

By COMMENTATOR STAFF 1952-53

Governor Adlai E. Stevenson received 92.4 per cent of the total votes cast by the student body of Yeshiva in a poll of student opinion on the national elections. He thus

had an approximate 16-1 advantage over his political opponent, Dwight D. Eisenhower who received 5.6 per cent of the vote. A total of 407 votes were cast in the poll. This total represents 78.7 per cent of the student body.

Governor Stevenson's majority dropped considerably when students were asked their

opinion on the outcome of the election. Sixty-nine and eight tenths per cent felt Stevenson would win, 10.6 per cent felt Eisenhower would win, and 17.4 per cent were undecided as to the outcome. A little over 2 per cent of those polled expressed no opinion.

The students were asked if they were in

agreement with their parents in their choice of a presidential candidate. Seventy-four and nine tenths per cent said that they were in full accord with their parents in the choice, 6.1 per cent were not, and 15.3 per cent did not

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## From the Archives (November 9, 1960; Volume 26 Issue 3) — Kennedy Poll Victor; "Interests" Play Role

By ABRAHAM SOFAER

It seems apparent now that we have the results of the Young Democrats' poll at Yeshiva College that Senator Kennedy has successfully wooed orthodox Jews—that

attend this school. Senator Kennedy received 318 votes to vice-president Nixon's 50 votes.

The subject of minority voting blocs has been much discussed. A great deal of work, energy and intelligence has been expended in this field. To presume that a poll of 368 college students at a religious school could represent a significant trend or anything of

any significance at all, would be dangerous, and highly injudicious.

However having stated this fact I am not attempting to present undebatable issues, it would be very pointless of me not to say anything at all. So, I will now present the results of this poll as seen through my eyes, even though the results may be highly

questionable.

### The Religious Issue

Are we young Jewish men of Yeshiva College "influenced by religion"? Out of the

Continued on Page 13



## The Cult Around the Corner

By ELLIE PARKER

I, like many of my Stern College peers, walk down 35th Street every day.

Though it is only my second year on campus, I have come to know the block like the back of my hand. However, after reading an article by the New York Post, I learned that there is more lurking behind the scenes of this frequented street than I had initially thought. In her 2014 article entitled “Inside Manhattan’s Secret Cult,” Kate Briquetelet goes on to describe an alt-right-esque group “claim[ing] its followers descended from a ‘master Aryan race’” that at the time, operated only one block from Stern College at 160 East 35th Street and Lexington Avenue.

Members of “The Light” believe that they are descendants of Atlantis and hold weekly meetings to recount incidents of their past lives. Believers claim to remember parts of their souls from as far back as 10,000 years. The cult is extremely insulated and forbids relationships with “know-nots” (people outside of The Light). The cult condemns homosexuality and encourages corporal punishment while keeping their women uneducated and brainwashed. The article notes that, to maintain their insularity, “young

women, denied higher education, are often married off to older men in the group.” The Light’s leader, Tom Baer, uses complete control tactics to maintain his following. As an ex-member recounted on his blog, “While he doesn’t claim to be all knowing he does claim to have access to the most information. He is

in a certain way, and it starts in childhood. Children are taught to fear.”

Though the group’s extraterrestrial beliefs seem out of this world, many cults have promoted similar ideologies for years. Famous celestially-oriented cults have included Heaven’s Gate, Jonestown and most recently,

*The notion of an operation this bizarre running out of an apartment just one block from Stern is incredible. But even more incredible is that not many know it exists.*

the sole keeper of the writings of The Light that were passed down for years. No one in the group can independently read these.”

The group goes beyond just talking about apocalyptic endings and reincarnation. True believers are trained to shoot and load M14 automatic rifles for their eventual confrontation with “know-nots.” “The belief is that Planet Earth will be ending soon, and we would have to defend our people and safeguard our food and supplies,” said an ex-member, who was privy to one of these weapons training sessions, to Briquetelet. “Everybody is brainwashed in this thing. They’re conditioned to think and behave

Scientology. Each one of these groups began the same way: a few exceptionally charismatic men attracted attention after claiming that they had been sent to Earth from a different planet, quickly gaining members and forming a following. “The Light” got its start in the same fashion. Dating back to the early 1960s, members began meeting in midtown Manhattan’s Murray Hill neighborhood in the 1970s. Though many sources indicate that the Light continues to operate out of Murray Hill, some ex-members who claim that the cult has moved to Upstate New York. Like other cults registered as charitable organizations, the IRS states that The Light,

legally recognized as the Congregation for the Light Inc., “is not required to file an annual tax return with the IRS because it is a church.”

With Light roots grounded for years in Murray Hill, the NYPD has never had an issue with Light members interacting problematically with non-members. They are so insular, in fact, that Stern security had not heard of them until The Commentator questioned them about the cult in October 2018. Though the group’s lack of disruptions helps quell some safety concerns, the ideology of “The Light” is no less frightening. As Sy Syms junior Rachel Kahen stated about the New York Post article, “At first, I thought I was reading a work of fiction, but then I reminded myself that these are real people who are practicing this real faith! It’s crazy to think people who you might encounter in your everyday lives could believe in such barbaric and fabricated religion. It almost reminds me of a more foolish, less extreme version of the Nazis. It’s comforting to hear that some people left ‘The Light’ and realized how brainwashed they were.”

The notion of an operation this bizarre running out of an apartment just one block from Stern is incredible. But even more incredible is that not many know it exists.



160 East 35th Street in Murray Hill, the past and suspectedly present meeting location of Congregation for the Light.

GOOGLE MAPS



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*ARCHIVES: STEVENSON,  
continued from Page 11*

know their parents' political choice.

Of the entire group of voters, only 9.8 per cent were eligible to vote. The rest were ineligible due to age (under 21), or lack of citizenship. Eighty-two and two tenths per cent were not old enough, and 8.9 per cent

were not citizens. Of those old enough to vote, 10 per cent were ineligible because they did not register.

Foreign students voted almost unanimously for Stevenson, with only one Eisenhower vote in 18 tallies cast.

In the Senatorial race, Dr. George Counts, Liberal Party candidate, received a plurality of 34.2 per cent of the total vote. Senator Irving Ives, the Republican incumbent,

polled 26.8 per cent, Brooklyn President John Cashmore, Democratic candidate, received 17.7 per cent of the vote, and Corliss Lamont, American Labor Party candidate, received 2.2 per cent.

However, 61.4 per cent of the students thought that Ives would be the victor in the New York election. Fourteen per cent felt that Cashmore would win, 6.63 per cent thought that Counts will win, and 2.6 per

cent felt that Lamont would carry the election. Seventeen and seven tenths per cent of the student body had no opinion on the outcome of the State Campaign.

When asked to state their political identification, 53.6 per cent considered themselves Democrats, 37.4 per cent as independents, 2.49 per cent Republicans, and 6.5 per cent favored other parties.

*ARCHIVES: KENNEDY,  
continued from Page 11*

50 young men that voted for Nixon, 44% or 22 young men felt that their vote was influenced by religion. Although this result does not fully reflect the noble and ancient ideals for which we stand at this institution, when compared with the total 368 votes cast, our twenty strong become diminished

in percentage, if not in principle. It hurts to admit that even twenty of us have become prey to such considerations.

"To what extent is your vote influenced by Jewish interest?" Here is a potent question. As Jews, it is difficult to separate ourselves from our interests as Jews. This would probably be an unhealthy dichotomy. Of the 50 that voted for Nixon, 28 felt that Jewish interests influenced their votes, while 200 of 318 had Jewish interest in mind when they

cast their ballots for Kennedy.

**A Jewish Vote**

It seems that these figures clearly show two things: The Jews here are influenced by Jewish interest, and that there is, in all probability, a "Jewish vote". Whether these revelations please us or not must depend on our individual views. The pages of Commentator are always available as a forum in which to discuss this question.

In spite of the predominant Jewish interest, the students felt that foreign policy was the major issue of the campaign. I guess this shows that we are relatively interested in the campaign and the destiny of the United States. However, on the basis of evidence present in our replies to the other questions, I fear that some poll in the future may show that some large percentage of those deeply concerned about foreign policy are in fact devout isolationists.

*GPATS,  
continued from Page 10*

including recruitment, interviews, curriculum development and control of the budget. For more significant decisions, she consults with Botman, a similar relationship she had with Rabbi Brander.

Concerning recruitment, the program is currently in its smallest year since its inception, with eight women currently enrolled in the program. This is one student less than GPATS' previous low of nine students. However, Price is hopeful that that three

more students will be joining the program in the spring, bringing the numbers back up to 11 students, above the average number for the last five years. The numbers for the last five years (including the current year) are nine students in 2014 - 2015, nine students in 2015 - 2016, 13 students in 2016 - 2017, 12 students in 2017 - 2018 and eight students 2018 - 2019.

Despite these low numbers, the staff and students of GPATS are still confident in the program, its future and the opportunities it creates.

"I don't think that this year reflects that something is going wrong," said Price. "Some

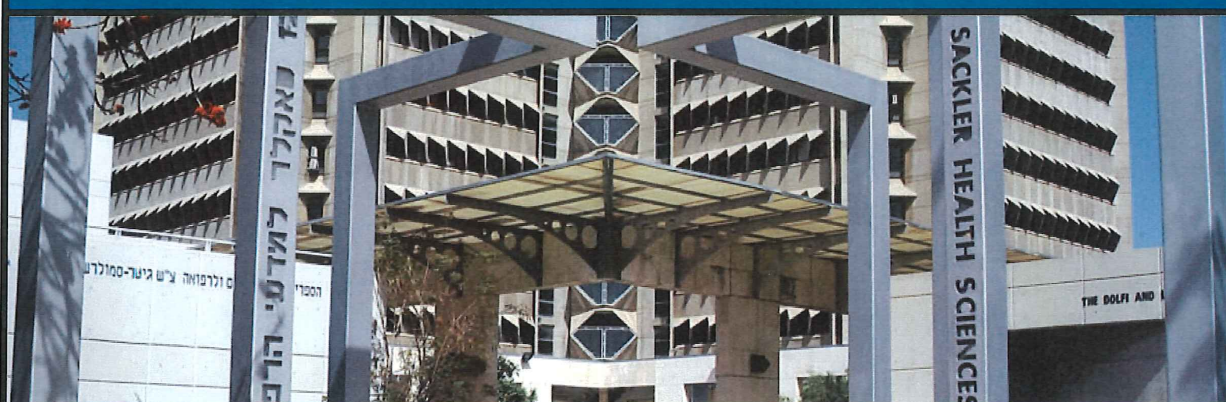
[years] are more and some [years] are less. It's a hard program to be in. It's a two-year commitment; you sit and learn all day. It's not a small thing."

"It 100% not only matched my expectations but superseded them," said Zahava Schwartz, a second year GPATS student and graduate of the Sy Syms School of Business. "I knew it was a once in a lifetime opportunity, and it was going to be a very demanding program, but I didn't realize quite how much I missed and yearned for just sitting all day and pushing through difficult texts. Once I started the program, I really began to wonder how I expected to go through my

life without doing it.

"I feel it is providing an important service and a very important need in the Jewish community," said Kahn. "In Israel, there are places for women to pursue advanced learning and Torah, and, in, America there aren't, certainly within the Orthodox camp. The only place really is GPATS, so I feel very strongly about it, and I feel very happy that YU is supporting it. I think that this is something that is desperately needed, and we are filling a very important need."

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# The Tower of Bavli: Schottenstein Syndrome and The Dangers of DIY Torah

By Aryeh Schonbrun

Over the course of the last generation, a revolution has taken place. Torah, once the prized possession of the few privileged students of venerable yeshivas and rabbinic dynasties, has gone the way of most of academia and worldly knowledge. More and more we desire to acquire its awesome metaphysical insights, and more and more we find it easily accessible and within reach of even the most uneducated and impoverished of our communities. Anyone with a reasonable attention span and a willingness to study intricate law can now pick up a range of specially produced *sefarim*, from Schottenstein (Artscroll) *Gemaras* to easily digestible Parsha interpretations, from straightforward *sifrei mussar* to the burgeoning field of *halakhic* guidebooks. The authors of the *Kizur Shulkhan Aruch*, *Mishna Berura*, and, among our contemporary society, *Shomer Shabbos Kehilkhosa* and *Peninei Halakha*, all have explicitly stated in their mission statements that the purpose for their *sefarim* was to clarify and elucidate the complexities of *torah sheb'al peh*; to lessen the onus laid on the average Jewish *baal habos* when inquiring into questions surrounding *halakhic* decisions, responsa and ideas. These books have made it extremely easy and accessible for the vast majority of us *yidden* to rid ourselves of doubt, consult the book and live fulfilling lives as God-fearing, Torah-keeping individuals.

What's more, as a result of the general fluency of many sectors of the Jewish population to the basic *halakha* and scriptures, and in response to the general curiosity of myriads of idealistic young men (and some women), Torah has been resurrected from the ashes of Auschwitz to the most productive period the Jewish people has ever seen. More *talmidim* study Torah today than ever before. More Torah is taught and rehearsed by thousands upon thousands of *yiddishe yingerleit* (youth) who day-in and day-out devote themselves to the continued development of Torah literature and the sustained transmission of our dear *mesora* to future generations. More Rabbis than ever roam the streets of Lakewood, Brooklyn, Jerusalem and Bnei Brak, and the Jewish people feel great confidence in her ability to continue her interminable divine task, and remains assured of her great fidelity to her hallowed tradition.

I have much appreciation for the greats of Torah and the forward-thinking *zadigim* who worked tirelessly to bring this revolution about. I love and respect dearly those Rabbis and leaders who engaged the tired and wounded spirit of a rejected nation and reinvigorated her following the great failure that was modern Europe. In America and Israel there arose leaders who wholeheartedly and undeniably saved the Jewish people from the abyss of cultural memory — addressing the spiritual, national and political needs of a nation left-for-dead — and maintain her until this day. I don't regret the great strides that Torah has made over the past few generations, but I do feel uncomfortable with the great uncritical praise heaped upon these apparent successes. I have attempted to locate my disaffection and my consternation regarding post-modern Torah society in an attempt to reassess my experiences with this all-important tradition, and in honest introspection as to why I do not connect.

I write to you out of disappointment, out of frustration and regret. I did not apply myself to study when I could have. I did not dive into the pool of endless wisdom that is the Torah when I had the chance, and now, as I grow older and must condition myself for the years of mindless

adulthood that await me, I feel that I offer myself, and you, an explanation, an attempt at describing the reasons why I was not able to internalize my experience as a talmid and grow in Torah.

When I first approached Torah, it must have been within the context of my relationship with my father. My father introduced me to the basic ideas, tenets and practices of the Jewish faith. My teachers encouraged me to develop my curiosity and abilities in connection to the Torah, while my friends and family offered me the basis for building a realistic Jewish lifestyle. Along the way, though, I began to suffer from a disaffection that has plagued me throughout my years of High School and *yeshiva*. Instead of becoming enthralled by the extreme vastness of the Jewish canon and the rich diversity of the great works of God and our people, I felt lost in a maze of endless intricacy, of indeterminable length and depth and of ideological confusion and isolation. The Torah that I was exposed to, the great wall of the Jewish people, overwhelmed me, struck me as threatening, intimidating and judgmental and limited my ability to enthuse my boyish idealism and materialize my supposed potential in reality. I sat through *shiurim*, nonchalantly recording the material necessary to pass my tests, to increase

to come close to the *masoret*, and the typical rejection of such overtures, yielding to the mundane explanations of "tradition," "responsibility," "Holocaust" and conformity. Though I did not reject all that I learned, it became increasingly difficult for me to accept a Torah that lacked what I considered the most important feature: persona.

In our fast-paced post-modern world, we often forget about the importance of human interaction. We meet each other online, interact virtually with a worldly apparatus that cannot be seen nor inquired of (i.e., the cloud) and have slowly become encumbered and addicted to new-fangled technological "advancements" that have eased us in our modern inconveniences, but have also robbed us of our humanity. While we rejoice in the material bounty that God has made for us, and in the relative stability and security of our times, we suffer incontestably from the biggest plague of mental illness, social stratification and disaffection in modern human history. Relationships, landlines, paper currency and idealism have long since receded from our cultural memory. They have been replaced by technology, individuation, financial monoliths and bare subsistence. Our lives, while physically blessed, have been spiritually cursed, and, sadly, Torah has not been spared.

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*I sat through shiurim, nonchalantly recording the material necessary to pass my tests, to increase my knowledge and navigate the world of halakha lemaase, but I failed to internalize my studies, failed to connect with the material, and thus with the masoret, and never quite felt satisfied with my achievements.*

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my knowledge and navigate the world of *halakha lemaase*, but I failed to internalize my studies, failed to connect with the material, and thus with the *masoret*, and never quite felt satisfied with my achievements.

As I began to grow and explore, the spiritual guidance that had been provided to some degree throughout my childhood did not keep pace, and my questions and desires quickly overtook my ability to maintain a meaningful, intimate connection with my mentors. I did not necessarily need a helping hand in the technical aspects of study; I was an adept student able to progress as demanded without disproportionate input from my teachers, but my spiritual side was left aside, unable to cope with the material nature of a grade-oriented, non-idealistic environment. My spiritual connection with Torah began to degrade as I became more aware of the disconnect between myself and my rabbis. No longer could I expect the individual treatment and patience I received as a child. Along with my general upbringing, I learned to grow up, become a man and learn to learn as a way of life. While I developed relationships with my Rabbis, I failed to identify with their way of life and their ideologies.

What was missing was the human aspect of the relationship, and, hence, also the metaphysical. The Torah that I learned in my teenage years, while comprehensive, impressive and challenging, failed to connect me to the personalities of my teachers and failed to engage me on a personal, spiritual level. The externalization of the inherent properties of Torah through intellectual stimuli, broad grading practices and rehearsed dogma restrained my ability to internalize what I learned and make the Torah part of my soul. A general alienation permeated my High School and *yeshiva* learning experiences, characterized by my desire

When the individual mindset of a postmodern *talmid* meets the human reality of the *masoret*, he suffers not only an initial withdrawal from the intransigent and didactic nature of previous generations' Rabbis. He also fosters within himself a deep-seated ill-will towards the continued educational investment in "accessible Torah." The transformation of Torah from an elite, unconventional pursuit, a deeply meaningful undertaking with great personal, spiritual and national consequences, into an every-day, every-man, impersonal and individual rite of passage has allowed for Torah to lose its stature as a highly mystified and deeply treasured object. We have become too accustomed to thinking of Torah as an easily accessible and powerful supply of spiritual enlightenment, and instead of admiring her from afar, we disrespectfully encroach upon her borders, plunder her metaphysical qualities and drag her down to our level. We thus colonize her richness, exploit the true indigenous *lomdonim*, bring with us new spiritual diseases and disrupt the wider spiritual ecosystem. We constantly sit and ponder the intellectual maze of our treasure, but as we have gained confidence in our own abilities, and in Torah's genial character, we risk nullifying the true holiness of millennia of *masoret*, or worse, deifying ourselves by limiting and simplifying Torah.

Instead of approaching God's teachings in fear and trepidation, unwilling and authentically uncommitted, we indifferently open up *sefarim*, indulgently anticipating spiritual progress. This heavy-handed approach, while it may allow for some superficial growth, must be checked and reassessed. While it may seem beneficial to us now that many

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An everlasting legacy.



## Bioethics in Practice

# What Does it Mean to be Brain-dead?

By SHIRA PERTON

Picture this: A 45-year-old woman is brought into an emergency room suffering from cardiac arrest. CPR is initiated at the scene, but once she is in the hospital she remains in a comatose state, and after five days she undergoes a neurological exam where she is determined brain-dead. The medical characters of this story want to withdraw care, medication and ventilation, while the patient's family refuses because her heart is still beating. What are the clinician's medical, legal and ethical responsibilities in such a situation? How can a doctor be sure that the patient will not regain consciousness? To even begin to look at these questions, we need to tackle an even larger one: What does it mean to be brain-dead?

When a doctor declares a patient brain-dead, it means that a patient has no neurological activity in either their brain or their brainstem. In the United States, a person is considered legally dead when he or she loses all brain activity. However, through ventilators and other technologies, a person can remain breathing far after they are determined brain-dead, although once off these machines they would quickly lose all ability to keep blood and oxygen circulating throughout their body.

The complexities that come along with

brain-dead patients began in the 1950's with the creation of the mechanical ventilator, which allowed physicians to keep patients breathing when their respiratory drives were lacking. Instantly, many questions popped up for physicians about the ethics of physiologically maintaining a person when there was no hope for his or her recovery, as well as questions about the worth of using resources that could financially burden patients' families and their hospitals. There was also the question of

could inadvertently kill another patient who would otherwise have a chance at a higher quality life.

With patients, there also come considerations of their social, cultural and religious beliefs and those of their family. Conventionally, when a person passes away the mourning process begins; however when a person is termed brain-dead, it is difficult for the family to grieve as they can still feel, hear and see a heartbeat. It is as though the person is simply sleeping.

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*What are the clinician's medical, legal and ethical responsibilities in such a situation? How can a doctor be sure that the patient will not regain consciousness?*

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the emotional toll that plays on a family when they are in a constant state of limbo. At the same time that the ventilator came out, the field of human organ transplantation began to emerge with transplants in the renal, hepatic and cardiac fields. The ideal state for organ donation is when there is still oxygenated blood flowing through the body prior to long-term ventilation. Thus, another difficult situation that can present itself in these cases is when the patient is a candidate for organ donation. Prolonging the donation of organs of a brain-dead patient

From a medical and legal perspective, once someone is declared brain-dead, the law allows a physician to remove ventilation and discontinue life support, and the physician does not have an obligation to meet with the family before taking such steps. In reality, the process is not that simple; physicians usually communicate with ones loved ones in order to best ease them into the next stage, as well as make them aware of the treatment. That being said, there are still the ethical dilemmas that present themselves when it comes to the family associated with the patient and

the needs they have and require, especially when they refuse to take their loved one off the ventilator.

Although these questions are many with far fewer answers than desired, an important message that can be gained from this dilemma is that every situation is more complicated than it seems. For centuries, we defined death as the instance where there is no longer any cardiorespiratory function, which today could lead to thousands of lives saved via transplant. However, trying to make the grey lines more black and white can also lead to manipulation of the borders of life and death, with a risk of intruding on an individual's right to life. There are numerous factors that we need to consider when making such decisions: What would the patient have wanted? Religiously, there may be issues that the patient's family is dealing with or the family's own difficulty with saying goodbye to someone who appears to be okay. Are the family members waiting for their loved one to heal, or for their own shock and pain to recover? It seems that the most important aspect to not lose sight of in such a situation is that the individual in the hospital is still a person, a human being, who at some point was living his or her best life. Let's not lose sight of that detail, and consider: What is truly best for the patient in the new condition to which he or she is confined?



Brain





Celebrate Israel Parade in June 2018 in midtown Manhattan

YESHIVA UNIVERSITY

## From the YSU President's Desk: On the Importance of Diversity

By **NOLAN EDMONSON**

"Our ability to reach unity through diversity will be the beauty and test of our civilization" -M.K. Gandhi

Yeshiva University is an institution that includes four New York City locations, 12 schools and a host of faculty and alumni. We are one university family, with many parts. Included in that family is a myriad of individuals who bring their specific talents, interests, life experiences, and personalities to create the corpus of this university. We are one body with many different minds. At YU we often stress the importance of the unity of that mind, as it creates a feeling of cohesion and a purpose among our students.

While unity is an important goal to strive for, I would like to suggest that an acceptance of diversity would add a dimension to our school that would only serve to strengthen it. Unity can sometimes suggest conformity, and perhaps justifiably so. Very often in

Our community includes students some of whom are outwardly observant, some of whom practice their Judaism more privately and some who are less and even not observant. It is my firm belief that such religious diversity should be encouraged

We are not compromised as a university by our religious diversity, nor is our impact as a Jewish institution lessened by it. Rather, we are strengthened and enhanced by every student who makes the conscious decision to live out their personal convictions, religious or otherwise.

Our university has prided itself in its 132-year history as being a place of intellectual rigor and a place where those who were daring enough to be bold thinkers could find kindred spirits. In my interactions with YU students, I have found that this is still the case. We are a university abound with people dedicated to exploring their Judaism and how it relates to the world around them. Let us commit ourselves to remember that which unites us while respecting and celebrating our diversity.

*We are not compromised as a university by our religious diversity, nor is our impact as a Jewish institution lessened by it.*

order to attain unity, people must conform to some standards, some norms. And while unity should be and is an important goal of our institution, an acceptance of diversity — more specifically, religious diversity — will be the test of our school's greatness as a premier Jewish institution in the 21st century.

and cultivated at our institution, precisely because it is an indicator of our students' ability to be thoughtful and independent thinkers. Religious difference is not something to be met with alarm or suspicion, but rather should be an opportunity for students to engage in an exchange of ideas.

*Tower Of Bavel,  
continued from Page 14*

individuals who could not connect to Torah in the past structure have received an entry pass into our *yeshivot*, I would warn that such an impression obscures the damage that such an approach incurs. When we separate the Torah from the national spirit, when we isolate the written books/guides from the living, breathing *masoret*, we not only harm the further development of Torah, we also endanger our continued existence.

The impersonal atmosphere bred by the disintegration of Torah from an inherent, natural, national pursuit, into stores of collected knowledge stored in the cloud and pored over daily by thousands upon thousands of *talmidim* must be remedied if we are to succeed in imparting to our offspring the genuine and imperfect experience of *limud torah*. Our spiritual lives, like our material counterparts, do not behave as do data. We change, live, die, grow and regress. We are of a dynamic nature, much unlike the simplistic resources most of us now rely upon. Torah

must not become a dry, didactic experience, ruled by a monopoly of printed material, and disconnected from the living nation. If we don't refocus our learning on the human aspects, on the living qualities of an inspired tradition, we risk becoming neo-Karaites, interested only in the literal meaning of the elucidated text, and unwilling to engage in the continuous struggle of the *milkhomsa shel torah*.

Our general humanity fails us today, but through an authentic connection to Torah we may learn again to interact with God

and with ourselves. The next time you find yourself at a loss while learning or possibly confused about what the *halakha* demands, don't run to your post-modern, post-Masoretic accessories. Engage your peers, engage your Rabbis, engage the *masorah* and ask the *shayla*!

Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations: ask thy father, and he will shew thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee. (Deuteronomy 32:7)



## Tea Time With Dovid

## Was Dumbledore Really Gay?

By DOVID SCHWARTZ

The question before us now concerns a man, a movie and magic. In the production of “Fantastic Beasts: The Crimes of Grindelwald,” the director David Yates initially decided not to portray Dumbledore as gay. There has been some considerable backlash. Yates conceded eventually and allowed for a scene which hints at his homosexuality. But I wonder: was Dumbledore really gay?

To answer this question, which is obviously an important thing to do, we must address two distinct and overlapping issues. The first is philosophical and therefore boring. The second concerns literary criticism, and is, therefore, also boring. I leave it to my readership to assess whether descent into boredom is a worthwhile sacrifice. I believe it is. I hope to show you why.

First, the philosophical issue. Are fictional characters really anything at all? The answer, of course, is no. Consider this illustration:

“The High Priestess of Yeshiva University has two hands.”

There is no High Priestess of Yeshiva University. She is a fictional character. She cannot, therefore, have two hands. For a thing to have two hands, or to have any property at all, the thing must exist.

But wait. If someone told you “Dumbledore is a wizard,” you would say that is correct. If another person told you “Dumbledore is a horse,” you would say that is incorrect. But why? Both of these propositions are equally false. Dumbledore does not exist, so he is neither a wizard nor a horse. The answer is that the first statement “Dumbledore is a wizard” likely denotes to

the following proposition:

“JK Rowling describes a character Dumbledore as a wizard.”

This is true, and, if this is what we mean by “Dumbledore is a wizard,” then that is also true.

Similarly, “Dumbledore is a horse” presumably denotes the following proposition: “JK Rowling describes a character called Dumbledore as a horse” which is false. Now, for the main question: was Dumbledore really gay?

As I illustrated above, Dumbledore was not in fact gay. Nor was he in fact straight. He was not in fact anything. Our question here concerns a literary issue. Did JK Rowling describe Dumbledore as gay? In an interview a few years ago, Rowling described Dumbledore as gay when asked by a fan if he was ever going to find love. But, let’s ask another two questions. Does the text of the *Harry Potter* series indicate that Dumbledore was gay? And, how much weight does Rowling’s view have on our reading of it?

The text itself is ambiguous. Which is to say, we can understand all seven books perfectly well whether we assume Dumbledore was gay or we assume he wasn’t. This would not be the case if JK Rowling, in that interview, made some other claim. Suppose she said Dumbledore was not, in fact, a wizard, but a horse. We would dismiss this as a poor interpretation of the books because there are parts of the books that militate against Dumbledore’s horsehood. Even if JK Rowling genuinely and earnestly believed she had described him as a horse, even if she intended to do so, we would say she was wrong. The principle is this: the validity of

any interpretive claim about a text depends on textual evidence.

His sexuality is more ambiguous than his horsehood. The text of *Harry Potter* reads well according to either interpretation. There are no passages which become incoherent if we assume Dumbledore is gay; similarly there are no passages which become incoherent if we assume he was not. Are there passages which are better explained if we assume he was straight? I don’t believe so. On the other hand, I don’t believe there are any passages which are better explained if we assume he was gay. Consider, for example, Dumbledore’s relationship with Grindelwald, the subject of our current con-

“a more fruitful interpretation.” A more fruitful interpretation is one that either (i) introduces a new dimension to the analysis than an alternative interpretation or/and (ii) impacts our understanding of other salient issues. To illustrate what I mean, consider the following interpretation of Dumbledore: He had six toes on his right foot. This is not a more fruitful interpretation, because nothing turns on the question of how many toes Dumbledore had on his right foot. Suggesting an interpretation of this matter does not add a new dimension to our analysis: it is inconsequential, uninteresting and irrelevant. It is therefore not an interpretation we ought to consider.

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*As I illustrated above, Dumbledore was not in fact gay. Nor was he in fact straight. He was not in fact anything.*

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trovery. There is nothing left unexplained if we assume that Dumbledore was straight. Similarly there is nothing left unexplained if we assume that Dumbledore was gay.

All of this is to say that either interpretation is equally compelling if we consider the text alone. But are there other considerations? There is another subtle philosophical problem here concerning something called “intentionality,” but I think this has been enough philosophy for one article. Let’s turn instead to the more obvious consideration: JK Rowling intended Dumbledore as gay, but, as I posited above, the text is inconclusive. So what now?

To answer this question, I would like to reference a concept (not my own) called

However, if we think of Dumbledore as gay, we raise many new interesting considerations. Is there a connection between Dumbledore’s creativity as a wizard and his sexuality? What was Dumbledore’s relationship with Tom Riddle like before they became enemies? How many of Dumbledore’s coworkers knew? Because interpreting Dumbledore’s character as gay is a more fruitful interpretation, we enjoy a more interesting reading if we accept Rowling’s view.

You may be wondering what the point of all this is. As I began writing this article, I was wondering the very same thing. My hope was that, by the time I had finished, I would have some answer. Alas. Earwax.



The Man in Question



## Why Local Elections Matter — So Go Vote

By YITZCHAK CARROLL

In a week or so, many of us will head to the polls and make our opinions heard in the democracy we are all so privileged to partake in.

Excited to cast our votes, many of us will focus largely on high-profile federal races for the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives. But despite the lack of buzz, state and local

elections that are on the ballot this fall are just as — if not more — critical to the future of our Modern Orthodox Jewish communities.

Right here, in New York State, imperative issues hang in the balance, to be determined by the results of November's elections. Legislation and funding decisions that impact each and every one of us and our families. But thankfully, we have a say in the results — and now, more than ever, it is critical for us to leverage our voices and votes to ensure

just that.

Last session, bills were introduced in the State Legislature to defund anti-Israel groups, such as Students for Justice in Palestine, that wreak havoc upon our friends at secular colleges. Legislation was put forth to bar companies that support the BDS movement from receiving state contracts and pension investments. Measures were put forth to bolster educational and security aid to the *yeshivas* and Jewish day schools many of our siblings attend. And almost all of these items were met with little success in Albany.

State and local governments make the decisions that have the greatest impacts upon our lives. One state statute in New York State tax law makes our Caf Cards non-refundable at the end of the year while banning "Caf-Daddy" too. Another state law prohibits the ACT exam from being given in New York State during the month of February. While the federal races may be the ones generating the buzz and hype, it is the state and local elections that largely determine the quality of our lives.

No party has a monopoly on solutions or good policy. Both parties have their strengths and weaknesses at every level of government. As former New York City Mayor Fiorello

La Guardia famously said, "there is no Democratic or Republican way of cleaning the streets." What matters are the individual, local representatives and their takes on the issues that matter most to us and our communities at-large.

The power of a local representative cannot be underestimated. Be it their ability to shepherd legislation to passage, steer funds to their district or be a vocal advocate for their constituents, the power of local, representative democracy is critical to beneficial public policy and its impact upon our daily lives.

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*What matters are  
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Before you go out and vote, do your research. Find out what the candidates on your ballot stand for — and whether they will support the issues that matter to you. Engage them and ensure that they are aware of you and your community's needs. Make sure your voice is heard and your interests will be well-represented in government. Because, as the saying in government goes, "if you're not at the table, you're on the menu."



The New York State Capitol in Albany

## The Ethics from in Between

By ESTHER STERN

"I have never let my schooling interfere with my education." —Mark Twain

There is definitely what to learn both inside and outside of the confines of the Yeshiva University school buildings. Inside, we have the traditional classroom setting. As for outside, why, just walking the streets of Manhattan can be a lecture in whatever

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*There is, however, a third  
domain for learning at YU,  
one nary spoken about —  
it is the place in between.*

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the heart desires. There is much to quench any thirst for knowledge; the street art can itself serve as an instructor with its power to speak thousands of words on politics and public opinion. These out-of-building learning opportunities are instrumental in helping build a larger and clearer lens through which to see the world. There is, however, a third domain for learning at YU, one nary spoken about — it is the place in between. Security desks, cafeteria cash registers and driver's seats on the shuttles are teacher podia in disguise. Those who occupy those spots, security guards, cashiers and shuttle drivers are our proto-teachers and auditing their lectures have taught me a great deal.

One of these teachers reminded me that I should not take my father for granted, that I should appreciate him more. Another went to great lengths to explain the importance of gratitude, and what a privilege it is to be able

to help others. In a specifically meaningful exchange, I learned how important it is to let others know that you care about them. One proto-teacher, rather unapologetically, told me to never apologize for saying how I really feel, and, on a separate occasion, reminded me that it's important for people to allow themselves to have a good time.

Some lessons were more implicit in nature, only able to be picked up if I paid attention. I saw that a smile can transform someone's day. I observed the impact made on students when they are spoken to in their native tongue, when they were given a break from struggling through language barriers. Although these teachers did not mark me

on an attendance sheet, they knew that I was present.

There is a world behind each person. I encourage my fellow students, and all those who love to learn, to audit a class from a proto-teacher from time to time. Everyone has a lesson to share, and many are eager to share it with you.



Security desks, cafeteria cash registers and driver's seats on the shuttles are teacher podia in disguise.



# A Response to Those Who Would Ask Bareheaded Students to Wear Kippot

By JACOB STONE

The Commentator's most recent editorial, titled "How Bare Heads Are More Than Just Bare Heads, and Why It Matters for YU", ends with a question: "Is kippah noncompliance an isolated issue, or is it indicative of something much more alarming about the state of Yeshiva University's undergraduate community today?" Before we sound our communal alarm, however, we should take time to meditate on the state of kippah noncompliance in YU. Specifically, we should ask if it is beneficial for us to not only accept, but also appreciate the community of bare-

Orthodox student should look like.

Our kippah-less community, though, subverts the narrative that all our students ascribe importance to YU's Orthodox image. Some YU students, like the author, might therefore suggest that kippah-less students should don kippot. But the kippah-touting YU community cannot claim sovereignty over the ability of other students to express dissatisfaction with our school and its religious values. As with other mediums of free speech, such as this newspaper, kippah-wearing is an important venue of expression of opinion and can only serve to further discourse about the future of the YU community. When done in a respectful manner, no critique of our

Kippah-less students may value their own religious self-expression more than they value homage to their university's Orthodox values. But the author's vision of YU is one of superficial obedience to Orthodox norms, which would do nothing to solve the ideological rifts that divide our community. If kippot symbolize Orthodoxy, then insincere kippah-wearing symbolizes insincere commitment to Orthodoxy. We should want our community's image to be one of intellectual daring, passion and expressivity, not mindless Orthodox adherence.

To project an image of a daring, passionate and expressive student body, we should not only begrudgingly accept, but also celebrate the bareheaded students on campus. What else would be a more powerful reminder that we think about our Judaism critically and have the passion to crystallize our intellectual convictions into real-world actions? If all male YU undergraduates thought carefully about our own religious convictions, surely not all of us would conclude that we should continue to wear kippot. The presence of students on campus who do not wear kippot shows that we, as a community, think critically about our religious decisions, and a lack of bare heads would imply the opposite.

The author asks us to "think for a moment about any other Orthodox institution... Would it not seem highly unusual in any of these institutions to find a population of men or boys who do not cover their heads?" This syllogism seems, at first, airtight. All members of Orthodox institutions should cover their heads. YU is an Orthodox institution. Therefore, all members of YU should cover their heads.

But YU is not comparable to any other Orthodox institution. As an institution of

higher learning, we should prize the freedom of intellectual inquiry and the diversity of opinions and actions that inevitably result from that. At high schools and summer camps, no one seriously engages in questions of religious identity and expression in the same way that some students do in YU. To represent our special status as the intellectual epicenter of Modern Orthodoxy, we should, unlike any other Orthodox institution, both tolerate and welcome our community of bare-headed *bochrim*. Their existence may be "alarming," yes, but they alarm us only to the fact that every student on our campus is free to make his or her own religious decisions.

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*If kippot symbolize Orthodoxy, then insincere kippah-wearing symbolizes insincere commitment to Orthodoxy.*

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CBS NY

Kippot have become symbolic of obedience to Orthodox Jewish norms.

headers within our larger YU community.

Regardless of their *halakhic* significance (or lack thereof), kippot have become symbolic of obedience to Orthodox Jewish norms. Students who do wear kippot on campus conform, either intentionally or unintentionally, to YU's norm of what an

community's values should be silenced for the sake of disingenuous conformity.

Whether kippah-wearing is culturally imposed on students, like the author suggests, or administratively enforced, our community would be overreaching into the personal religious values of bareheaded students.

## Molding Our Community on Beren Campus

By BELLA ADLER

Shabbat on the Beren campus has gotten a bad rap over the past few years. Common phrases I hear on campus are that it's boring, that nobody really stays in, the food is terrible and it's not co-ed. Some speak of wanting a "real" Shabbat experience. These statements about Shabbat that are often thrown around about our community invoke a certain premise that I disagree with.

Those statements compare Shabbat at Stern College to the shabbat experiences of other colleges, which is an illogical analogy. At a secular college, Shabbat life plays a very different role; when daily classes and interactions are not necessarily Jewish, Shabbat has a different value. At Stern College and Yeshiva University at large, we have overt contact with our Judaism interspersed into our everyday lives — in our classes, Beit Midrash programs and countless *shiurim*, and because of this, it seems obvious to me that expectations for religious programming have to be looked at from a different perspective.

Because of everyday exposure to our Judaism, finding proper Shabbat programming at Stern becomes a challenge of fine-tuning the Shabbat experience to cater to what each of us is familiar and comfortable with. Our struggles come from dealing with the conflicts that arise when our wants differ.



Shabbat on a Modern Orthodox campus merits a different approach.

For example, some students desire a coed experience, while others only feel comfortable in an all-female environment. Some students want programming every week complete with scholars in residence, while others want minimal guests.

These varying opinions create an incredible opportunity to mold the Shabbat experience into whatever we want. **What I am advocating for is a deeper**

**understanding of what it means to build a Shabbat society that can put aside nuance for the sake of a greater community.** I am advocating for respectful change, the type that opens our doors to our diverse student body and broadens our community. I am advocating for you to take charge of this change.

The size of the Shabbat community is growing. The students who create our core

Shabbat community are a tight-knit group of people willing to put aside nuances in order to build community. And no, it is not fully coed. Because, again, Shabbat in a Modern Orthodox university looks different than a Shabbat in another college. We have both all-womens shabbatons as well as coed shabbatons. We have mixed programming and single-gender hangouts. We have women's tefillah groups as well as a minyan. **We have options, and I am advocating for you to help us mold them.** I am advocating for you to experience a Shabbat at Beren: where it doesn't matter what you wear, what food you eat or what semester you are in. You will find friendship and maybe a new passion too. Our theme-based Shabbatot will expose you to strong Jewish values, ethical dilemmas in religion, big-name speakers and controversial and stimulating discussions — the sort of things that bring our community together.

Be inspired by a community that is being formed to inspire you. Come because the Shabbat community at Stern is growing. Come because you are ready for a new and diverse Shabbat experience at Beren. Come to see and learn with new perspectives. Come because you don't want to miss out on exciting change on campus. **Come because this is an opportunity to have experiential learning of how to build and lead a successful Jewish community. It's in your hands.**



## “My Parsifal Conductor”: A Review

By LILLY GELMAN

“My Parsifal Conductor,” written by Emmy Award-winner Allan Leicht and directed by Robert Kalvin, retells the historical story of the premiere performance of Richard Wagner’s (Broadway actor Eddie Korbich) famed opera “Parsifal.” Meant, according to Wagner, to be “a festival play for the consecration of the stage,” “Parsifal”’s deeply-religious themes ran through the roots of the opera and its music. Wagner and his wife, Cosima (Claire Brownell), could not imagine anyone other than a Christian conducting the orchestra for the performance,

so, when King Ludwig II of Bavaria (Carlo Bosticco) chooses highly-acclaimed Jewish conductor Hermann Levi (Geoffrey Cantor), to lead the opening performance of Wagner’s last opera, Wagner and Cosima immediately object, leading to the opening plot of the play.

Set in the 1930s by Cosima Wagner’s deathbed her home, Haus Wahnfried, in Bayreuth, Bavaria, “My Parsifal Conductor” retells the series of events between the appointing of Levi as conductor, the first ever “Parsifal” performance, and the death of Richard Wagner, through the words and eyes of Cosima as she attempts to prove to the angels that she deserves a spot in

heaven despite her history of anti-Semitism and bigotry. During her story, we meet not only Wagner, Levi and Ludwig, but also Friedrich Nietzsche (Logan James Hall), Cosima Wagner’s one-time love.

One can know nothing about Wagner or be able to sing every note in “Parsifal” and they will enjoy the story, acting and script. Leicht’s writing allows each of the characters to shine, molding and shaping them through both serious soliloquies like those of Cosima and comedic quips like those of Nietzsche.

One character, however, remains relatively stoic and static throughout the play, showing little comedic acting or nuanced human flaws — Hermann Levi. Perhaps the strong undercurrent of anti-Semitism put Leicht on the defensive when it came to writing Levi’s lines, making him a relatively calm, intelligent character to ensure that, as Michael Dale wrote in his review of the play for Broadway World, “the audience to laughs at Wagner’s anti-semitism, rather than *with* it.”

Leicht’s theme of anti-Semitism takes on a character of subtlety as we discover that while Wagner and Cosima decried Jews in Bavaria, they adored their “friend” Levi — as they so endearingly called him throughout the play — and his musical brilliance. Their objection to his conducting the premiere “Parsifal” performance had nothing to do with his character, but rather his Jewishness. From this subtle theme arises a nuanced question: Can a general criticism of one’s religious identity really stand separate from criticism of one’s character?

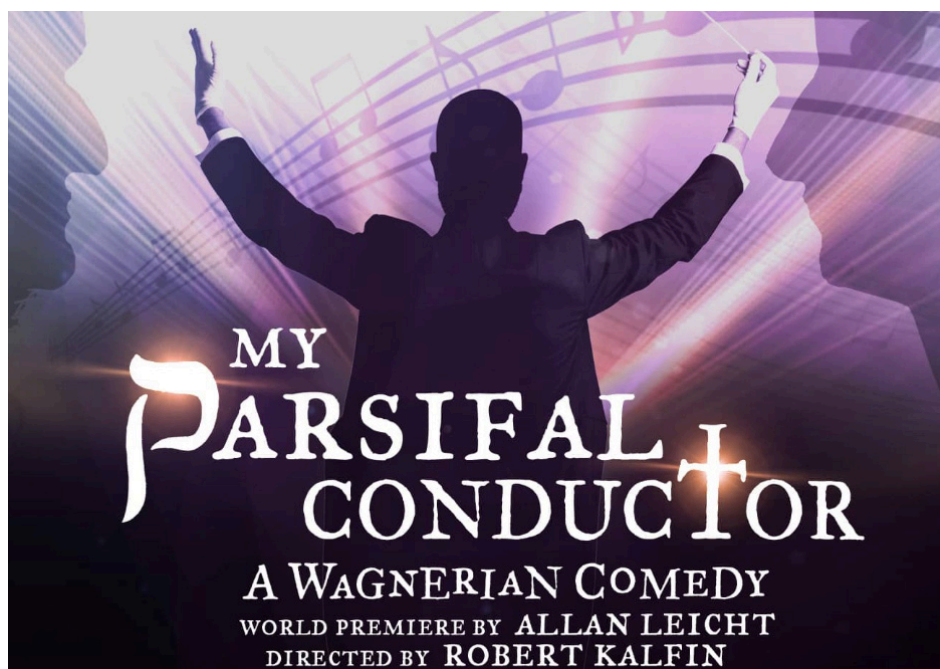
Once brought to light by the beginning scenes of the performance, this question of separation and specificity begins to weave its way into the underlying fabric of the

play and its historical foundation. Can we separate Wagner’s art from his atrocious anti-Semitism? Does Cosima’s friendship with Levi counteract her lifelong hate of the Jews in Bavaria? Can we sever the association of Wagner’s music from Hitler and simply view Wagner’s art in a vacuum?

Many themes run through the play — anti-Semitism, marriage, friendship, religion — each illustrated with a balance of class and comedy by the talented actors and Leicht’s wonderfully effective and alliterative writing. One of the play’s greatest talents, however, lies in its ability to depict the lives of a series of complex and intertwining historical figures in a manner expository enough to understand, yet entertaining enough to remain engaged. The added character of rambunctious Nietzsche — both a friend and critic of Wagner — helps create a well-rounded historical picture, adding depth and layers both to the depiction of “Parsifal” and its critical reception as well as to Cosima’s character and marital relationship with Wagner. One who sits down in those velvety seats with no knowledge of the historical context stands up with a historical gap in their education filled.

Littered with chuckle-filled moments as well as thought-provoking themes, “My Parsifal Conductor” manages to make an entertaining evening from some well-told history. Playing for a limited time at the Marjorie S. Deane Little Theater at the West Side YMCA, “My Parsifal Conductor” will surely prove to be an afternoon, or evening, well spent at the theater.

*“My Parsifal Conductor” is playing now and until Saturday, November 3rd, 2018. Tickets are available at <https://myparsifalconductor.com/>.*



My Parsifal Conductor

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

## The Case for Online Dating

By SHOSHY CIMENT

The Atayal were a Taiwanese aboriginal tribe with an interesting mating ritual: headhunting. To win over the women of the tribe and display their bravado, Atayal men used to hunt and display the heads of their enemies on pikes as trophies. Because who needs roses and chocolate when you can have an actual human head?

If this doesn’t sound romantic to you, that makes sense. In today’s day and age, receiving a severed head would probably warrant a restraining order instead of a marriage acceptance. But at the time, this was the norm.

Evidently, as culture and time evolve, our customs and social norms do as well. In a sense, online dating is just the newest courtship fad — a product of our changing world.

To its disparagers, dating apps, represent a slide into a technology-controlled world, where screens suck the romance out of any potentially meaningful relationship.

But that doesn’t have to be the case. Online dating is like headhunting in one important way: both practices can result in a happy and supportive relationship.

In 2016, it was reported that 20 percent of those in current, committed relationships had begun dating online. In 2015, 7 percent of marriages were between couples that met on a dating site.

To be sure, it is human nature to be suspicious of the unfamiliar. When dating apps and websites first started, people were wary of letting a computer into their most intimate relationships. While technology

generally aims to improve life, we cannot help but maintain some kind of distrust to its overall value, lest we end up in our own personal episode of Black Mirror.

But the taboo surrounding online dating appears to be fading as well. That is, downloading a dating app is not considered a “last resort” anymore. According to the Pew Research Center, attitudes toward online dating have significantly improved since 2005, when Americans had less exposure to the idea.

The stigma is going away. Forty million Americans currently use dating apps and the numbers are only growing. At least 27 percent of Americans self-reported using dating apps in 2016, up 10 percent since 2013.

Why ignore innovation when it has been

proven to be helpful, time and time again? Dating apps, for the most part, seem to be doing what technology was meant to do — bring people together.

*Online dating is like headhunting in one important way: both practices can result in a happy and supportive relationship.*

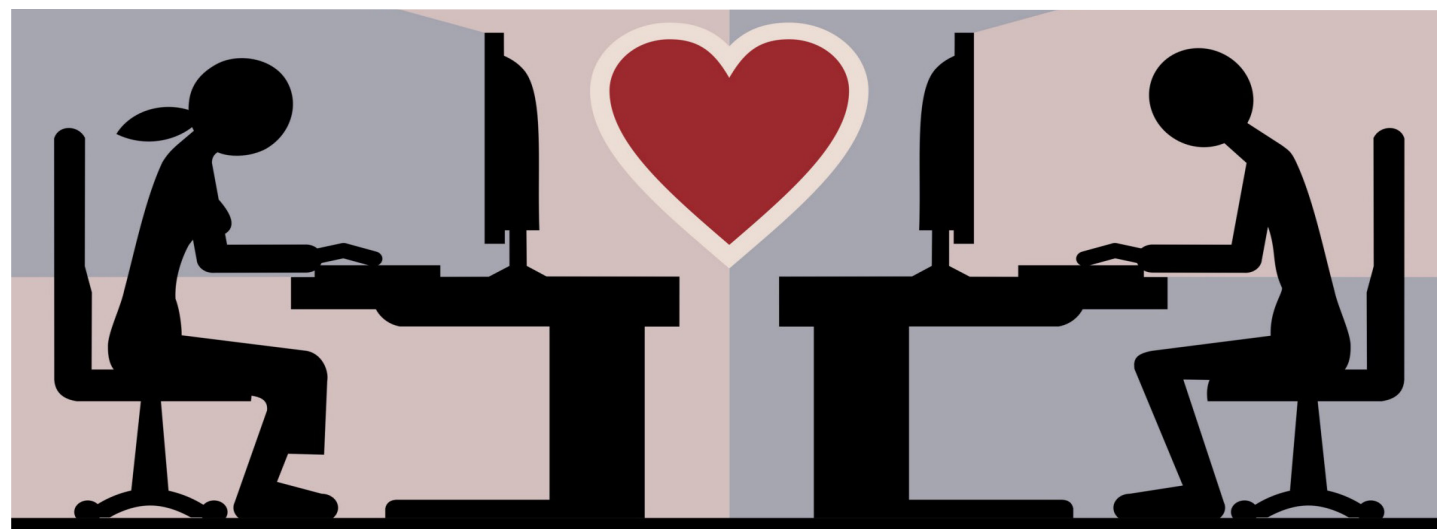
I understand the naysayers. It would be nice if finding love were as easy as it seems in the movies. Nobody wants to court a screen. And falling for profiles instead of people is a scary thought.

At the end of the day, sites like like Tinder and eHarmony aren’t exactly ushering in a

dystopia devoid of true love. Online dating may be changing the way people find love, but the game is still the same. The moment you start that first date and say hello to that very real person across the table, the app is void. You are on your own.

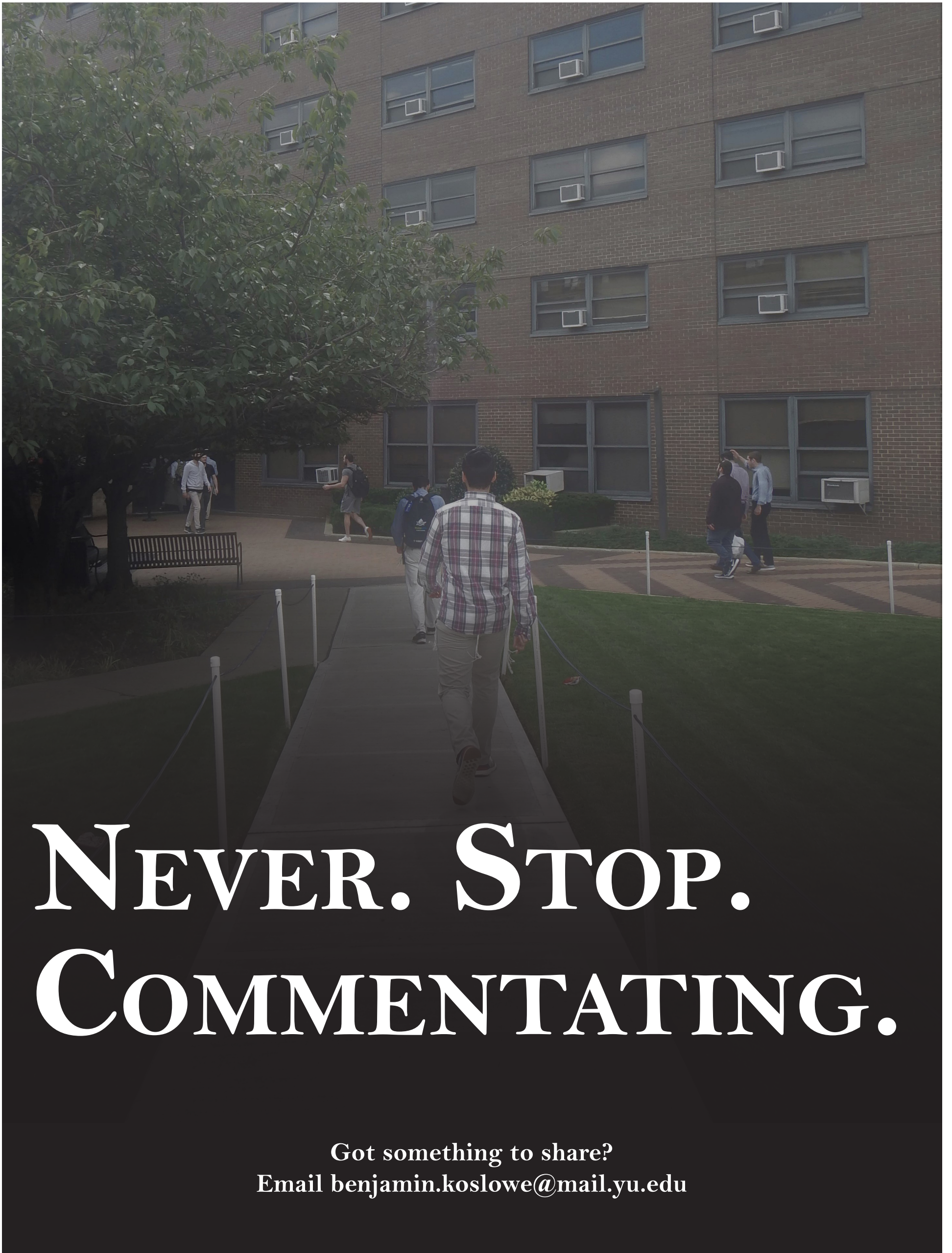
And what’s the worst that can happen? Crude behavior? Happens beyond the screen as well. Bad date? That too!

For those who prefer to meet people the old-fashioned way: power to you. I, like most people, would probably prefer that method too. But to those who are trying the online dating thing as well, keep doing you. Despite our differences, we can certainly agree on one thing: Whatever its form, if love is calling, pick up. Or in this case, swipe back.



Online dating can result in a happy and supportive relationship.





# NEVER. STOP. COMMENTATING.

Got something to share?  
Email [benjamin.koslowe@mail.yu.edu](mailto:benjamin.koslowe@mail.yu.edu)



## Finance Club Hosts “Wall Street 101” Event

By BENNI TUCHMAN

On October 12, students interested in pursuing careers on Wall Street flocked to the Sky Caf to learn about what it takes to land one of those coveted summer analyst positions. The event began with sushi and light refreshments, followed by a *d'var Torah* given by Yonah Hiller. Yonah spent this past summer working at Goldman Sachs as an investment banking summer analyst in the leveraged finance group. He spoke about taking responsibility for developing and creating the world; the stage was set for a riveting and enlightening discussion.

Doni Yellin, a board member of the Finance Club and MC of the event, asked the panelists to briefly introduce themselves and to describe their roles at the jobs they held on Wall Street. The panel consisted of YU students and alumni who have occupied a broad range of jobs in the financial sector. Zevi Litwin landed a job at Houlihan Lokey in their valuation department. Evan Axelrod, a senior at YU, worked at Goldman Sachs in the investment banking division this past summer and plans to return there full-time after he graduates. Yakira Klein, a senior at Stern, worked at Merrill Lynch in their wealth management division. Each panelist is a superstar in their own right, and they offered extremely valuable advice to those in the crowd.

After the introductions, the panel got straight down to business, prompting the panel with the following question: “What is the best way to successfully navigate the recruiting process and come out with a job on the other side?” The panelists seemed to focus on three ideas. First is knowing what you want. Axelrod advised, “Once you have an idea of the division you’d like to pursue it’s important to display that focus when you network with professionals and recruiters. You should apply to a broad array of opportunities but still have a sense of direction in terms of where you’d fit best.” Recruiters want candidates who are confident about what they want and why they want it. This way the recruiters can be assured that once hired, the candidate will be committed to giving it their all, and not just using the company’s platform as

a stepping stone.

The next main piece of advice that the panelists offered was about networking. Solo Shulman, who worked in the investment banking division of RBC, said, “I remember being told early on when I was recruiting that once I have a position that I’m happy with, it’s now my job to pay it forward to others. That’s why I spend so much of my day reading over students’ resumes or mock interviewing. Without those that went before me guiding the way for me, I wouldn’t have a job, and as a result I really make sure that I am paying it forward to others. I’ve been helping a lot of YU students and Stern students with recruiting and something that I really stress often is how reaching out to YU alumni is so crucial – they are busy but they want to help.” Casting a wide net is

the name of the game in finance, and opportunities lie in the most unexpected places. It’s not always the obvious connection who facilitates a job opportunity. Sometimes it’s the random guy who you see in *shul* every once in a while; other times

it’s the YU alum who you saw on LinkedIn.

The last piece of advice stressed the importance of hard work. There are a lot of criteria to meet before being competent enough to enter the finance industry. Candidates must be up-to-date on current events, well-versed in the finance terminology, have polished resumes and well-rehearsed elevator pitches that they can pull out at any moment. Even after that, you’ve just scratched the surface. Landing a job in finance is like anything else in life – the reward is great, but the price is high. Those who are willing to go the

*Landing a job in finance is like anything else in life - the reward is great, but the price is high.*

extra mile have a much larger chance at landing a job on Wall Street.

Once the panel Q&A concluded, the students and panelists broke off into separate groups to mingle, network and ask more personal questions. Dani Koenigsberg, a junior at YU, stated, “The event confirmed my beliefs about working on Wall Street – that it won’t be easy. I need to get cracking. This gave me much more confidence about the internship search”.

The Finance Club is one of the biggest clubs at YU with well over 90 members. The purpose of the club is to teach students about finance and its various components, as well as to push students for interviews. On Monday, October 29, the Finance Club is pairing up with the Entrepreneurship Society to host Michael Eglit from Blackstone, Barry Sklar from Goldman Sachs and David Brecher from FM Home Loans for a talk about startups. The Club will be hosting a series of other Wall Street-focused events throughout the semester.



Over 60 students attended the Finance Club’s “Wall Street 101” event.

## Perks on Perks on Perks: Is Today’s Talent Pool Too Full for Hire?

By SARAH TORQUEMAN

Thought work-perks were reserved for startups? Think again. With unemployment at record lows, companies of all sizes are offering a myriad of incentives with hopes of distinguishing themselves from other businesses in an effort to attract potential employees.

Today’s talent pool is full. Candidates with impressive credentials and comprehensive skills have become scarcely available for hire as labor markets tighten. Recruiters are struggling to secure top talent because of two underlying factors. Due to record-low unemployment rates, talent has grown increasingly difficult to find, and firms have been competing with other companies to attract top talent.

To solve this problem, talent acquisition leaders have introduced employee benefits spanning from variations of company-paid health insurance plans to ping-pong and foosball tables at work with one focus at heart: incentivize the people. Whether to attract or retain top talent, workplace incentives have been incorporated into small and large companies and have permeated small and big cities across the United States.

Taking it one step further, companies have found that with glamorous employee benefits, their staffs are happier and more motivated to complete their work productively and in a timely manner. Team and company loyalty has played a distinct role in retaining talent. As Salesforce puts it, “We aim to deliver rewards that are competitive ... We trust you to get the job done.”

According to Glassdoor’s 2017 employee benefits report, 57 percent of

candidates said that benefits are certainly top considerations when accepting a job. As employees’ interests have become increasingly diverse, employers are working to specifically tailor their benefits to each worker. Personalized employee benefits are just a taste of the strikingly unique yet attractive perks companies are incentivizing their workforces with.

Flexibility has become an incredibly common perk companies are using to lure talented employees. Most notably, an unlimited vacation policy has allowed employees as much time off as they choose, so long as they get

the job done. According to ZenPayroll CEO and co-founder Joshua Reeves, the allowance for flexible time off shows that management trusts and respects its employees and the work they do, leading them to take individual ownership of their work and perform better. Other variations of this have permitted remote work, paid time off, and extended and paid maternal and paternal time off.

Workplace health and wellness programs are another popular perk firms have added. With the desire to manage hefty medical costs and avoid rising insurance rates, companies sought to prevent health-related accidents and

misfortunes in the first place with health and wellness programs. Healthy living and preventative care have been the core of programs with specific perks including reimbursed yoga classes, in-office meditation, wearable fitness trackers and nutritionist consultations. Companies like SurveyMonkey offer employee-sponsored medical, dental and vision health plans. Beyond mere productivity, increased alertness, reduced back and joint pain and weight loss have been just a few of the results reported by Fast Company magazine to be effects of workplace additions like exercise workstations and treadmill desks.

Catherine Collinson, CEO and president of the non-profit Transamerica Institute and Transamerica Center for Retirement Studies, has encouraged companies employing Gen X and Millennials to incorporate retirement plans into their packages of perks, emphasizing these populations’ concern over their future financial security.

Additional professional development has also become an attractive company perk, whereby employers invest in training, crash courses and even MBA programs for their employees. The effect of these programs is not only improved retention rates but sharper teams as well. According to Forbes, Google has offered a free machine learning course to introduce its tech employees to machine learning fundamentals. By incorporating professional development programs to their benefits packages, employers are perceived as genuinely interested in their employees’ overall success and long-term professional growth. This has certainly enabled them to stand out.

Other bizarre yet widespread perks include bring-your-dog-to-work, veterinary pet insurance, commuter travel reimbursement, tuition assistance, adoption and fertility support, free lunch and dinner, on-site child care and haircuts. Luring talent into the office has been a challenge, but talent acquisition leaders have evidently added creativity to the mix, striving to distinguish themselves in the eyes of top talent before other hotshot global powerhouses snatch them up.



Companies are offering all sorts of incentives in an effort to attract talented employees.





Juul's E-Cigarettes are quickly attracting thousands of youth.

## The Crown Juul

By Nathan Hakakian

Outside just about any college campus, students can be seen sucking on a USB look-alike and trailed by a cloud of scented vapor. This growing sensation, "JuulING" (pronounced *jeweling*), has taken the nation by storm, becoming especially popular amongst youth, with the number of high-school students using e-cigarettes in the past 30 days increasing by roughly 75 percent (or about 3 million) since the same 30-day period last year.

Why Juul? What sets it apart from other forms of e-cigarettes? For starters, the sleek design makes it very appealing, fitting comfortably in one's pocket. Additionally, the use of Juul is quite simple, with the device containing two parts: The Juul device and the Juul pod. The Juul device has a charge that can last for about a day and can be charged in a USB port. The pods contain a multitude of flavorings and 0.7mL e-liquid with 5 percent nicotine and last for about 200 puffs. These flavors have become fan-favorites amongst youth, with flavors such as Cool Cucumber and Mango dominating the market. Each Juul device sells for approximately \$35, while the pods sell for \$16, according to Juul's website.

Founded originally in 2015, Juul Labs is currently valued at 15 billion dollars. The San Francisco start-up has increased sales by 800 percent, accounting for 71 percent of the U.S. e-cigarette market.

But according to Juul Lab's CEO, Kevin

Burns, youth were never the target market. Instead, according to Burns, Juul's mission is to eliminate the use of cigarettes, trying to veer over 1 billion smokers to a healthier alternative. Juul has taken a very clear stance

innovative patented formula that combines nicotine with salt. The salt mixture likely makes the vapor less harsh, allowing users to easily inhale more strongly and for a longer period of time.

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on youth using their product, stating, "We are committed to deterring young people, as well as adults who do not currently smoke, from using our products. We cannot be more emphatic on this point: No young person or non-nicotine user should ever try (Juul)." Juul has even committed to donating \$30 million over the course of three years to fund independent research to this cause. Juul will also support state and federal initiatives to raise the tobacco-buying age to 21.

But is this a case of too little too late? Although JuulING appeals to youth, many are uninformed about the numerous health risks associated with Juul. According to a recent study conducted by the National Youth Tobacco Survey, each Juul pod contains just as much nicotine as a pack of cigarettes. The average nicotine concentration of a Juul pod is 5 percent, which is over double the nicotine concentration of an average e-cigarette (2.4 percent). This can be attributed to Juul's

Additionally, studies have shown that the same toxic metals found in cigarettes, such as cadmium, beryllium, nickel and chromium are also found in Juul. Other studies have linked the use of e-cigarette to an increased risk of heart attack.

With this in mind, the FDA has begun to take a more active role. It has announced that it plans to limit the number of flavors that are being sold by Juul, eliminating flavors such as Mint, Cucumber and Mango. In July 2017, the FDA said it was considering lowering nicotine levels in cigarettes and delayed the deadline to 2022 for electronic-cigarette companies to submit applications to the FDA. The FDA even conducted a surprise inspection of Juul Labs' headquarters, collecting more than one thousand pages of documents focusing on sales and marketing practices with regard to the youth population. The FDA has mandated a 60-day window beginning in September for Juul and

four other leading e-cigarette companies to establish plans for youth prevention.

While the United States' regulations are still in flux, Juul has begun expanding internationally, building a presence in the United Kingdom and Israel. This comes at a very opportune time, as the smokeless tobacco and vapor product market hit \$1.72 billion, up 33 percent from 2017. But the U.K. product has variations, as it only contains 1.7 percent nicotine, complying to the strict regulations of the European Union Tobacco Products Directive. Additionally, the Juul device sells for \$10 cheaper and most of the flavors are available, some with different names. Israel, on the other hand, has taken an active stance, as it announced in August that it planned to ban Juul, claiming it possess "a grave risk to public health." With Juul containing almost three times the recommended amount of nicotine, Israeli officials felt that the introduction of a new e-cigarette would further set back their efforts to reduce cancer, the number one leading cause of death in Israel.

While the use of Juul and other e-cigarettes continue to grow, scientists are hoping that new studies, as well as other government regulations, can stunt the growth of the so-called e-cigarette monster. The hope is that lower nicotine levels and less appealing flavors will trim sales amongst youth. But until official standards and strict regulations are enforced, Juul will continue to lead the market in sales, predominantly appealing to both non-smokers and youth.



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# Thank you!

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.*



Rav Moshe Weinberger



Rav Menachem Penner



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