

Seventh Annual  
OXFORD SUMMER INSTITUTE ON MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY JUDAISM (OSI)  
5 to 10 July 2020

Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies, University of Oxford  
in conjunction with the Berman Center for Jewish Studies, Lehigh University

**Worship, Space, and Performance in Modern  
and Contemporary Judaism: Continuity and Innovation**

The Oxford Summer Institute on Modern and Contemporary Judaism (OSI) is an interdisciplinary workshop where scholars of Jewish religion and culture from around the globe join a large contingent of European Jewish studies specialists, along with select faculty from the University of Oxford, for a week of intensive study and intellectual exchange. Designed to facilitate rigorous academic engagement on key themes in the Jewish religion, it provides a framework for raising original and challenging perspectives from a broad range of disciplines, with the potential to provide novel insights into contemporary Judaism.

The OSI was founded under the auspices of the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies by Dr Miri Freud-Kandel of the University of Oxford and Professor Adam Ferziger of Bar-Ilan University. Since 2015, Professor Hartley Lachter of Lehigh University's Berman Center for Jewish Studies has served as co-convenor, and we are honoured that Professor Jodi Eichler-Levine of Lehigh, a key contributor to past events, has now joined as co-convenor.

Entering its seventh year, the OSI has stimulated the production of a major scholarly monograph along with multiple special journal volumes and individual publications. Moreover, it has facilitated unique informal interfaces between veteran and early career researchers from diverse geographic and disciplinary backgrounds. It has a particular interest in contributing to the ongoing expansion of Jewish studies throughout Europe. OSI "alumni" are today a worldwide network of researchers, who continue to learn and collaborate with each other. These scholars attest to the profound experience that the OSI offers for rigorous interaction with colleagues in a relaxed but focused framework that spurs creativity and critical but non-judgmental discussion.

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The theme of OSI 2020 is "Worship, Space, and Performance in Modern and Contemporary Judaism: Continuity and Innovation". Researchers utilizing a range of analytical tools will explore the profound and fascinating intersection between the material and physical with spiritual elements of religious experience and identity. Proposals are invited that explore the development of the content, culture, and enactment of Jewish worship and space from multiple perspectives, including: texts/media, theology, mysticism, law, material culture, visual and performative arts, architecture, denominations, geographic contexts, ethnography, gender, comparative religion, language, literature, and technology. We value scholarship on pre-modern and modern matters that facilitate comparative historical analysis of current developments.

Some of the broader questions that will frame the seminar are:

- What are the definitions and parameters of modern/contemporary Jewish ritual space?
- In what ways does contemporary ritual space and performance digress from prior precedents?
- How do these elements manifest the theology, ethics, and norms of a particular moment?
- What role has/does the ritual realm play/ed in the evolution of modern/contemporary Judaism?

- What spatial innovations have impacted on the content, context, and experience of Jewish ritual?
- What roles do gender, ethnicity, ability, and other aspects of identity play in the development of Jewish rituals and their spatial and performative manifestations?
- How has academic research influenced ritual creativity? How has ritual creativity, performance, and space influenced scholarship? What are the ethics and challenges of studying these subjects?
- How do modern and contemporary Jews grapple with issues of tradition and innovation in terms of ritual, space, and performance?
- To what extent and for which constituencies do older and/or more “traditional” spaces remain the major sites of Jewish practices? How widespread are novel sites of Jewish meaning making? Are specialized social media offering alternatives to physical ritual space and performance?

Applicants who are accepted will be asked to prepare an original paper (15-20 pages) that will be distributed to the participants one month prior to the event. This maximises constructive exchange and feedback during the workshop itself. **Please note that we prioritise applications from the European continent.**

**Application Deadline: 17 January 2020.**