

# YIFTACH OFEK

CURRICULUM VITAE

[yiftach@uchicago.edu](mailto:yiftach@uchicago.edu)

## EDUCATION

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<b>PHD</b>	<b>UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO</b> DIVINITY SCHOOL   HISTORY OF JUDAISM	EXPECTED AUGUST 2021
	Dissertation: “The New Jew of Zionist Historiography: The Social Vision and Historical Imagination of Yitzhak Baer, Gershom Scholem, and Yehezkel Kaufmann”	
	Committee: Paul Mendes-Flohr (Chair), Na’ama Rokem, Shalom Ratzabi	
	Examinations: History and Memory in Jewish Thought (Paul Mendes-Flohr) The Zionist Idea (Paul Mendes-Flohr, Na’ama Rokem) Medieval Jewish and Islamic Philosophy (James Robinson) Criticism and Literary Theory (Richard Rosengarten)	
<b>MA</b>	<b>HARVARD UNIVERSITY</b>   JEWISH HISTORY AND CULTURE	NOVEMBER 2014
	Thesis: “Jacob Taubes and the Meaning of Jewish History”	
	Advisor: Peter Gordon (History)	
<b>MA</b>	<b>UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO</b>   POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY (MAPSS)	AUGUST 2011
	Thesis: “Christianity as a Problem in the Political Philosophy of Alexis de Tocqueville”	
	Advisor: Nathan Tarcov (Political Science)	
<b>BA</b>	<b>UNIVERSITY OF YORK (UK)</b>   POLITICS AND HISTORY	JULY 2005
	Thesis: “Leo Strauss’s Critique of Nietzsche”	
	Advisor: Jon Parkin (Politics)	

## RESEARCH INTERESTS

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Zionism and Israeli Intellectual History; Modern Jewish Thought; Political Theory; Philosophy of History; Literary and Cultural Criticism.

## AREAS OF TEACHING COMPETENCE

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**Jewish Thought and History:** The Development of the Zionist Idea; Judaism and Modernity; Major Trends in Jewish Historiography.

**Political Thought and Intellectual History:** Classics of Social and Political Thought; The Philosophy of History from Vico to Hayden White; Religion and the Critique of Modernity.

## PUBLICATIONS AND OTHER WRITINGS (SELECT LIST)

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### BOOK CHAPTERS

“Leo Strauss and Existentialism” (Hebrew), in Ehud Luz, “Introduction”, in Leo Strauss, *Liberalism and the Crisis of Modern Jewish Thought* (Hebrew), ed. Ehud Luz, (Jerusalem: Leo Baeck Institute and Bialik Institute, 2012), pp. xvii-xix.

### ESSAYS (NON-REFEREED)

“The Literary Essays of Mordechai Shalev” (Hebrew), *HaShiloach*, No. 15 (July 2019), pp. 163-173.

“Hannah Arendt and the Challenge of Jewish Sovereignty”, *Counterpoint: The University of Chicago Conservative Quarterly*, Vol. 1, No. 4 (February 2011), pp. 23-29.

“Obama and the Middle East”, Symposium on the First Two Years of his Presidency, *Counterpoint: The University of Chicago Conservative Quarterly*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (Oct. 2010), pp. 43-44.

### BOOK REVIEWS (NON-REFEREED)

*The End of Europe: Dictators, Demagogues, and the Coming Dark Age*, by James Kirchick, *Mosaic*, (May 1, 2017), <https://mosaicmagazine.com/observation/politics-current-affairs/2017/05/the-end-of-europe-as-we-know-it/>

*Ben-Gurion: A Political Life*, by Shimon Peres (New York: Schocken, 2011), in *Jewish Review of Books*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (Spring 2012), pp. 16-18.

## PRESENTATIONS

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### CONFERENCES AND OTHER ACADEMIC TALKS

“The Idea of a Jewish Society: Yitzhak Baer’s *Israel Among the Nations* Reconsidered”, Association for Israel Studies Annual Conference, 7-9 June, 2021 (accepted).

“Hayden White and the Possibility of Faith in History”, The Use and Abuse of History for Theology and Ethics: Mining the Past for Present Norms: University of Notre Dame and University of Chicago Fifth Annual Joint Graduate Student Conference, March 29th, 2019.

“Eric Auerbach 101”, The Divinity School “101” Series, University of Chicago, January 18th, 2018.

“Gershom Scholem and Jacob Taubes on Messianism and History”, Midwestern Inter-University Workshop in Jewish Studies, University of Chicago, Nov. 2nd, 2015.

“Nachman Krochmal and the Possibility of post-Textual Judaism”, “Ways of Knowing” Graduate Conference in Religion, Harvard University, Oct. 23rd, 2015.

“Jacob Taubes and the Meaning of Jewish History”, The Jewish Studies Workshop, The University of Chicago, April 20th, 2015.

“Liberalism and the Jewish Question in the Thought of Leo Strauss”, Leo Baeck Institute in Jerusalem, May 2nd, 2013.

## **PUBLIC LECTURES**

- “Lehi and the Struggle for Jewish Independence”, Introductory Talk to the Film “Rage & Glory” (dir. Avi Neshet, 1984), Anshei Sholom Beit Israel Synagogue, Chicago, IL, Jan. 20, 2020.
- “Labor Zionism”, Hillel House, University of Chicago, March 11th, 2019.
- “What is Modern Judaism? Or: Prolegomena to Bialik”, Anshe Emet Synagogue, Chicago, IL, Feb. 21st, 2019.
- “The ‘New Jew’: Then and Now”, Temple Israel, Valparaiso, IN, May 11th, 2018.
- “Time and Timelessness in Jewish History”, Jacob Berman Community Center (Rehovot, Israel), Aug. 30th, 2015.

## **TEACHING EXPERIENCE**

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### **UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO | COMMON CORE | DIVISION OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES**

**LECTURER** AUTUMN 2019 – ‘20

Classics of Social and Political Thought (Plato to Machiavelli)

**INTERN** 2018 – ‘19

Classics of Social and Political Thought (Plato to Machiavelli), Autumn Quarter

Classics of Social and Political Thought (Hobbes to de Staël), Winter Quarter

Classics of Social and Political Thought (Tocqueville to Nietzsche), Spring Quarter

### **OTHER RELEVANT EXPERIENCE**

TRAINED WRITING CONSULTANT, UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO WRITING PROGRAM SPRING 2018

**TIKVAH FUND | MAIMONIDES PROGRAM** JULY 2018

TEACHING ASSISTANT, “THE ZIONIST IDEA”

## **GRANTS AND FELLOWSHIPS**

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### **UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO**

#### **THE JOYCE Z. AND JACOB GREENBERG CENTER FOR JEWISH STUDIES**

Dissertation Completion Fellowship 2020 – ‘21

Conference Travel Grant Oct. 2015

#### **MARTIN MARTY CENTER FOR THE PUBLIC UNDERSTANDING OF RELIGION**

Junior Fellowship 2019 – ‘20

#### **DIVISION OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES**

Tuition towards completion of MAPSS Program (1/3) 2010 – ‘11

## HARVARD UNIVERSITY

### SIDNEY L. SOLOMON ENDOWED FELLOWSHIP

SEPTEMBER 2013 – MAY 2014

Full scholarship and stipend towards the pursuit of Master of Arts degree

## OTHER FELLOWSHIPS AND AWARDS

<b>TIKVAH FUND FELLOWSHIP</b> , “Political Thought, Economics and Strategy”	SEPT. 2011
<b>ISRAEL MINISTRY OF DEFENSE</b> , Historical Awareness Youth Scholarship Award	DEC. 2002
<b>IDF OFFICERS TRAINING SCHOOL</b> Outstanding Cadet	JUNE 2007
<b>IDF SPOKESPERSONS UNIT</b> Outstanding Soldier Distinction	SEPT. 2006

## PROFESSIONAL AND MILITARY EXPERIENCE (SELECT LIST)

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**IDF STRATEGIC DIVISION** | TEL AVIV, ISRAEL  
HEAD OF NATO AND EUROPEAN UNION DESK

JULY 2007 – AUGUST 2009

**IDF SPOKESPERSONS UNIT** | TEL AVIV, ISRAEL  
SPOKESMAN TO THE EUROPEAN AND AMERICAN PRESS

NOVEMBER 2005 – JULY 2008

[LIEUTENANT (RES.) IN ISRAEL DEFENSE FORCES]

## LANGUAGES

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**HEBREW** – Native (High Pass, University of Chicago Proficiency Exam)

**ENGLISH** – Fluent

**FRENCH** – Fluent (High Pass, University of Chicago Proficiency Exam; Harvard Certification Exam; *Certificat Militaire de langue Française* awarded by the French Military; lived in Belgium for 5 years)

**GERMAN** – Reading Knowledge (High Pass, University of Chicago Proficiency Exam)

**DUTCH** – Reading Knowledge (lived in Belgium for 5 years)