

SIMON NAMED MSU'S FIRST HOLOCAUST STUDIES CHAIR

Amy Simon became the first William and Audrey Farber Family Chair in Holocaust Studies and European Jewish History at Michigan State University when she began the newly created position on August 16, 2016.

She now is one of just a handful of Holocaust Studies chairs in the country and the first and only one in the state of Michigan.

"I am thrilled and honored to be joining the MSU faculty," Simon said. "The areas of Holocaust and Jewish Studies continue to be important and relevant not just historically, but also in the context of current events. I am therefore pleased to have the opportunity to take a leading role in the continuation and development of these studies at a university so clearly dedicated to their future."

Simon, who holds a PhD in History from Indiana University, previously was a researcher at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) and taught at the University of Maryland in its History and Judaic Studies departments.

She is a former Leon Milman Fellow at USHMM and a former Kagan Claims Conference Fellow. She also has published articles on Holocaust literature and Holocaust perpetrators and regularly participates in international workshops and conferences through the USHMM, Yad Vashem, the Association for Jewish Studies, and the Holocaust Educational Foundation.

The William and Audrey Farber Family Chair in Holocaust Studies and European Jewish History is a core position for MSU's Jewish Studies program, an interdisciplinary program spanning six colleges including the College of Arts & Letters and more than 10 campus departments.

"It is integral to our Jewish Studies program, which serves, on average, 600 students in our classes and 35 Jewish Studies minors," said Associate Professor Yael Aronoff, Director of Jewish Studies and the Michael and Elaine Serling and Friends Chair of Israel Studies.

The new position is funded by a \$1.5 million gift by donors William and Audrey Farber of West Bloomfield, who recognize how MSU's Jewish Studies program has grown during the past few years.

"Now one of the most outstanding Jewish Studies programs in the country, the addition of a professor in the area of Holocaust Studies is critical," said Jeffrey Farber, son of William and Audrey Farber.

Inspired by the Farbers' generosity and motivated by the influence the position could have on Jewish Studies, Detroit-area couple Michael and Elaine Serling contributed \$500,000 to the endowment.

In Simon's new role at MSU, she has access to the University of Southern California's Shoah Foundation Visual



History Archive, an online portal housing more than 52,000 video testimonies of survivors and witnesses of genocide – namely, the Holocaust. Using this online archive brings the teaching and research of Jewish Studies into the realm of the digital humanities, an area in which the College of Arts & Letters already excels.

And, like the chair position itself, private support made a subscription to the archive a reality. MSU alumni Edward Brill and his sister, Leslie VanBrandt, made a \$150,000 gift in memory of their brother, Michael, who had a fondness for history and a fascination with World War II. This gift made the Shoah Foundation access possible.



The William and Audrey Farber family