

**The Jewish Studies and Women's Studies Projects are pleased to
announce**

**THE HARRIET LEDER JEWISH WOMEN'S STUDIES AWARD
in the amount of \$500.00**

STEP ONE: Read the minimum requirements below to see if you are eligible.

- 1. You are a male or female student of any ethnic or religious background.**
- 2. You have completed at least 40 credits. Preference is given to a student who has completed at least 21 credits at NCC. Your grade average is at least 3.0.**
- 3. You completed or are in the process of completing at least one course in Jewish and/or Women's Studies: JWS 101 (Intro. to World Jewish Studies), WST 101 (Intro. to Women's Studies), WST 105 (Gender and Popular Culture), WST 201 (Women's Studies in Global Context), WST 110 (The Goddess in World Religions), ENG 261 (Holocaust Lit.), ENG 248 (Women Writers), ENG 247 (Women in Lit.), HEB 101, 102, 201-202 (Beginning Hebrew I or II, Intermediate Hebrew I-II), HIS 178 (History of the Black Woman in America), or HIS 179 (History of the Black Woman in America II).**
- 4. With the application form, please submit an essay of at least 750 words (maximum of 1,000 words) responding to one of the following reading and question options. The final decision will be made on the basis of your essay and having met the above requirements.**
- 5. Please drop off the completed application and essay by March 22 to:
Attn: Joylette Samuels/Williams, Coordinator of Women's Studies
English Department (Bradley Hall – Building Y), Room 13**

ESSAY OPTIONS FOR HARRIET LEDER AWARD

Please read the following three essay options and select one; read the passages noted for the ESSAY OPTION chosen and address the questions that follow in an essay of at least 750 words (1,000 maximum). Using sources to back up your ideas is suggested, and they must be cited and documented.

OPTION ONE

Excerpts are from "JAP: The New Antisemitic Code Word" by Francine Klagsburn in Kesselman's *Women: Images and Realities* (pp. 557-60).

Write an essay of 750 words in response to the following:

Francine Klagsburn asks, "Isn't it odd that the term JAP, referring to a spoiled, self indulgent woman, should be so widely used at a time when women are working outside their homes in unprecedented numbers...?"

"Jewish women, like women throughout society, are trying to find their own paths, their own voices. And, along with other changes that have taken place, they have been finding themselves Jewishly. And yet we hear the term JAP being used, perhaps almost more now than ever before. Why?"

From Goldie Hawn in the movie, *Private Benjamin* to Sarah Jessica Parker in the series *Sex in the City*, the label "JAP," Jewish American Princess, has been affixed to the Jewish woman. The label is associated with the traits of materialism and entitlement on the one hand, and neediness and dependency on the other.

Write your comments about the "JAP phenomenon" by responding to the following questions:

- a) What does the label JAP signify about Jewish women and does its meaning apply to Jewish women alone?
- b) Why has such a label come to be associated with Jewish women and not with women from other backgrounds?
- c) What other stereotypes about Jewish women appear in the media today and why?

OPTION TWO

Excerpts are from *Seek Her Out: A Textual Approach to the Study of Women and Judaism* by Elyse Goldstein and "Seeking a Jewish Feminism" by Julie Greenberg in Kaye/Kantrowitz and Klepfisz's *The Tribe of Dina* (p.186)

Write an essay of 750 words in response to the following:

"Jewish feminists have 'rediscovered' the concept of the *Shechinah*. . . . With the development of Kabbalah, Jewish mysticism, . . . the *Shechinah* takes on feminine characteristics" and "begins to be described as princess, daughter, and the feminine principle in the world. . . . On a metaphoric level, *Shechinah* holds tremendous power for us. . . . God and the *Shechinah*. . . originally were One. . . . The ultimate goal of Judaism is one of harmony. We must look for harmony between God and *Shechinah*, between masculine and feminine, and ultimately between male and female persons. As the *Shechinah* and God are One, so too the masculine and feminine ultimately are also one and need only be brought back together. We do so through daily acts that reunite the broken fragments of masculinity and femininity" (Goldstein 94-96).

“A commitment to feminist Judaism pervades our lives. . . , not only the spiritual elements of our lives. . . . In fact, the freedom to have spiritual life is integrated with the material organization of our lives.” For example, it is hard “to be part of a spiritual community if the cost of the religious retreat or synagogue membership is prohibitive (and women are the poorest people in a patriarchal system). Feminist challenges for economic justice. . . could have a major impact on the very shape and standards of progressive Judaism. We discover that the spiritual is political!” (Greenberg 186).

Write your comments by responding to the following questions:

- a) What positive role can reinforcing God as both male and female play in our modern world?
- b) If human communities held gods in high esteem that incorporated both feminine and masculine attributes, how might the daily lives of women and men be affected positively?
- c) How can Judaism and other religions answer the need for “harmony. . . between male and female persons”?

OPTION THREE

Excerpt from “Two Jews, Three Opinions” by Robin M. Neidorf in *Listen Up: Voices from the Next Feminist Generation*, ed. Barbara Findlen (1995), pp. 212-220.

Write an essay of 750 words responding to the following:

I am what is known as a lapsed Jew. It almost sounds like an orthopedic condition—she visited the doctor to have her lapsed Jew realigned. But being a lapsed Jew can be serious business where other Jews are concerned: I have read more than one engaged polemic written by an overzealous rabbi, denouncing my kind as taking up where Hitler left off. After all, I hold no Sabbath day as holy, I keep no kosher kitchen and the recent death of my grandfather occasioned my first visit to a synagogue since the Reagan administration. To people like these righteous rabbis, we lapsed Jews are burning our own history.

Yet, if I were to describe myself, the word “Jewish” would certainly be among the top five adjectives I would use, somewhere below “feminist,” somewhere above “argumentative” and “slightly neurotic.” . . .

Many more Jews of my generation have grown up in secular-yet-Jewish households than our older counterparts. In the American Judaism of the first half of the twentieth century, there was Conservative or Orthodox life, and there was completely assimilated life, but there was not much in between. Jewish feminists of my generation have the advantage of existing alternatives. We have models of Jewish communities that are not traditionally observant and yet continue to call themselves Jewish. We have grown up with the powerful reality of women rabbis. We have celebrated our Bat Mitzvahs without the pressure of being the first in our congregation to do so.

And yet there are still the contradictions, the centuries of misogyny that we continue to contend with, the polemics against assimilation, the not-so-subtle-put-downs that suggest that a Jew who eats bread during Passover is an invisible Jew. . . .

Write your comments by responding to the following questions:

- a) Why might a woman today wish to be Jewish or be identified with another religion?
- b) Who is Jewish, how should being Jewish be defined, and by whom?
- c) Why might being Jewish, or any other religion, present a problem for a woman and how have Jewish and other women responded to this problem?

OPTION FOUR

Excerpt from “There is a Partner in Peace”— Women Key to Peace in Israel and Palestine, 6 October 2010. Media Release, Women Advancing Equality and Human Rights.

Write an essay of 750 words responding to the following:

A women’s peace delegation — led by Nobel Peace Laureate Jody Williams — wrapped up a seven-day tour of Israel and the Palestinian Occupied Territories. The delegation of 10 women — mostly American — traveled to Jerusalem, Ramallah, Hebron, Haifa and Nazareth, and met with women peacebuilders, as well as the Israeli military, members of the Knesset, lawyers, Israeli settlers, staff from the United Nations and community leaders. Their goal was to learn first-hand the challenges to peace — and how some women are overcoming those barriers.

. . . Said Williams, “Against the backdrop of violence and daily humiliations, there are women working on the ground in both Israel and the Palestinian Occupied Territories who use nonviolent protest and dialogue as a means to building a more just and equitable situation. For real peace to happen, these women must be part of the official peace process. . .

“Most of the people in power derive their power from the conflict,” noted one activist from Isha L’Isha, a grassroots organization based in Haifa that includes both Israeli and Palestinian women. “We need to ensure that people without power — but committed to ending the conflict — are also heard in the peace process.”

The group — along with other women’s groups in Israel — has called for no less than 30 percent of direct participation by women in all level of negotiations to ensure greater transparency and more attention to the needs of civilians, including women. As well, they are asking that a plan for reconciliation between the two communities be part of any agreement.

Write your comments by responding the following questions:

- a) What evidence can you bring to the argument that women: a) have less interest than men in deriving power from conflict, and b) bring methods like nonviolence and dialogue to the process of conflict resolution?
- b) Will the path to “real peace” in the Israeli/Palestinian conflict be achieved only if women are brought into the peace process? Why? How can women’s inclusion make a difference?
- c) These women ask that a plan for reconciliation be part of ending conflict between the two communities. Why might this idea, similar to the reconciliation processes undertaken in South Africa and to a lesser extent in Northern Ireland, be an important aspect of concluding the Israeli/Palestinian conflict?