

## [Passing of Dr. Matthew B. Hoffman](#)

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H-Judaic is greatly saddened to learn of the untimely passing of Dr. Matthew B. Hoffman (1968-2020), Associate Professor of Judaic Studies and History at Franklin & Marshall College. We are grateful to Prof. Marco Di Giulio for the following necrology:

With great sadness, the Program in Judaic Studies at Franklin & Marshall College writes to inform you that our dear colleague, Matthew B. Hoffman (1968-2020), Associate Professor of Judaic Studies and History, passed away.

Matt joined Franklin & Marshall College in 2004 with a joint appointment in History and Judaic Studies. He received his Ph.D. from the Joint Doctoral Program in Jewish Studies at the University of California, Berkeley, and the Graduate Theological Union. Steeped in interdisciplinarity, Matt's scholarship examined the dynamics of Jewish religion, culture, and politics with a focus on Jewish identities in transition and tension. In his first book, *From Rebel to Rabbi: Reclaiming Jesus and the Making of Modern Jewish Culture* (2007) published with Stanford University Press, Matt focused on Jewish depictions of Jesus in Yiddish literature, artistic works, and Jewish intellectual debates to document a shift in Jewish perceptions of Jesus that reflected attempts to carve out a distinctly modern European Jewish identity. Matt turned in his research to other manifestations of secular Jewish activity and identity, which bore fruit in the volume he co-edited with Henry F. Srebrnik, *A Vanished Ideology: Essays on the Jewish Communist Movement in the English-Speaking World in the Twentieth Century* (SUNY Press; 2016). He also published articles in academic journals, as well as reviews and encyclopedia entries. In the last several years, he began to move into a new area of intellectual passion: free speech debates in American academia and society. He understood himself as an exponent of classic Enlightenment principles that are essential to free, democratic societies; and he hoped that this new line of scholarship would contribute to the continuation and strength of those principles and practices. At Franklin & Marshall College, Matt offered courses in premodern and modern Jewish history, American Jewish cinema and humor, Jewish historiography, and Eastern European Jewish culture. Additionally, Matt dedicated himself tirelessly to the F&M chapter of the American Association of University Professors. He served as co-president and president of the chapter for two terms and he sat on its executive board for several additional years.

Matt's colleagues in the Judaic Studies program, which he chaired, will miss his energy, his teaching, and his readiness to discuss and debate vital matters of education, politics, and academic life. To his colleagues in the History department, which he also chaired, Matt was not only a valued teacher and scholar, but a treasured friend - genial, witty, caring, and fun. In all of these ways and more, his absence leaves an aching hole for colleagues and students alike.

H-Judaic extends deepest sympathies to Prof. Hoffman's family, colleagues and students.

Jonathan D. Sarna

Chair, H-Judaic