

Brandeis University

Maurice and Marilyn Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies

The Summer Institute for Israel Studies: 2018 Annual Survey

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Introduction

Summer 2017 was SIIS's 14th cohort of scholars, bringing the total number of SIIS Fellows to 291. Since its inception, SIIS has been the subject of an independent program of research and evaluation (Koren, 2004; Koren, 2005; Koren, 2006; Koren, 2007; Koren, 2008; Koren, 2017; Koren, Aronson, & Saxe, 2013; Koren & Boxer, 2009; Koren & Boxer, 2011; Koren, Boxer, & Samuel, 2012; Koren & Fishman, 2015; Koren & Fleisch, 2013; Koren & Fleisch, 2014; Koren, Saxe, & Fleisch, 2016; Shain, 2018). Broadly, the annual evaluations have found that participation in SIIS successfully prepared faculty to teach about Israel. Some SIIS Fellows have also become active contributors to Israel studies scholarship and to the discourse about Israel on their campuses (Shain, 2018).

This report begins with a methodological overview of the 2018 annual survey of SIIS Fellows and continues by describing the current academic and professional positions held by SIIS Fellows. The report details the number and characteristics of the Israel-focused courses taught by Fellows in the 2017-18 academic year, and the research and publishing activities of the SIIS Fellows. Finally, the report assesses the SIIS Fellows use of Schusterman Center resources and their subjective impressions of the impact of their SIIS experiences. The discussion section summarizes the findings.

Methods

In order to assess the impact of SIIS, researchers at the Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies have conducted an ongoing, longitudinal study of the careers of SIIS Fellows. The research began in 2005 when data were collected from the first cohort of SIIS Fellows about their course offerings and other professional pursuits in the academic year following their SIIS experience (Koren, 2005). Since 2005 (SIIS's second year), surveys of SIIS Fellows have been conducted annually, with each successive cohort surveyed for the first time in the spring of the academic year following their SIIS experience. This report is based on the 2018 survey of SIIS Fellows, the 14th in the series. Data were gathered on SIIS Fellows from the 2004 through 2017 cohorts.

Survey Content

The 2018 survey of SIIS Fellows collected information about their current academic or professional positions, as well as data about their Israel-related activities in the 2017-18 academic year including courses taught, work with students outside the classroom, research and publications, and use of SIIS resources.

Survey Administration

The survey was conducted online. Email invitations with unique survey links were sent to the 2004-2017 SIIS Fellows on May 8, 2018. Email reminders were sent to all survey nonrespondents on May 16, May 29, June 5, and July 5. Schusterman Center staff members also encouraged Fellows to complete the survey by posting to the SIIS listserv (siis@lists.brandeis.edu). Between June 21 and 28, survey nonrespondents with accurate telephone information received a phone call reminding them to complete the survey. The survey was closed on July 16, 2018.

Response Rates

At the time of the spring 2018 survey, there were a total of 290 SIIS Fellows.¹ Of these, 66% responded to the spring 2018 survey. Response rates were higher for more recent cohorts with all of the summer 2017 Fellows responding to the survey (Table 1).

¹ Reported in analysis as 290 Fellows after the death of one Fellow.

Table 1: Response rate to spring 2018 SIIIS survey, by SIIIS cohort

SIIIS cohort	Number in cohort	Number responding	Response rate
2004	17	11	65%
2005	21	7	33%
2006	21	14	67%
2007	17	9	53%
2008	26	14	54%
2009	20	10	50%
2010	20	10	50%
2011	22	12	55%
2012	20	17	85%
2013	21	14	67%
2014	21	17	81%
2015	22	14	64%
2016	20	19	95%
2017	22	22	100%
All cohorts	290	190	66%

Findings

Academic Positions

The SIIS program is intended for college and university faculty who are actively involved in teaching, scholarship, and mentorship of students. As of summer 2018, at least 88% of SIIS Fellows who responded to the survey were in academic positions at colleges or universities (Table 2).

Table 2: Professional positions of SIIS Fellows

	Number	Proportion
In an academic position at a college or university	167	88%
Retired or Emeritus at a college or university	8	4%
Working outside of academia	10	5%
Not working	1	1%
No information available	4	2%
Total	190	100%

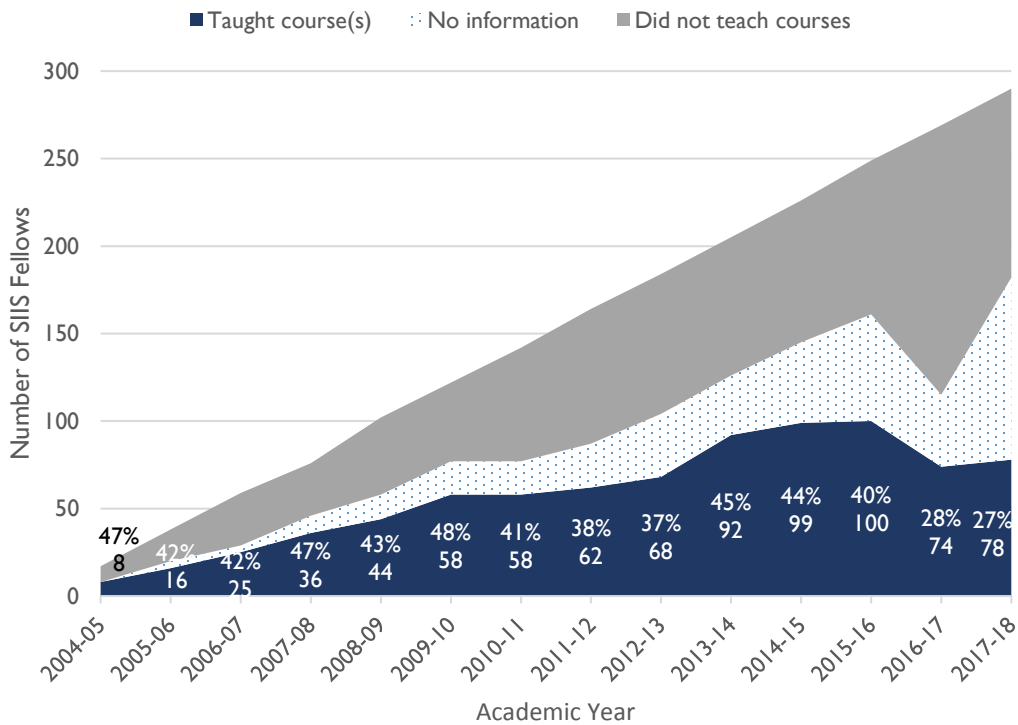
Courses

The 2018 survey asked about both Israel-focused courses and Israel-related courses. Israel-focused courses deal with Israel for a majority of class time; Israel-related courses contained content influenced by SIIS but Israel was not the main focus of the class. In the survey, additional information such as course title, department, focus, and enrollment was gathered only for Israel-focused courses.

Israel-focused courses—Number and reach of courses

In the 2017-18 academic year, 27% of SIIS Fellows taught a college or university course with a specific focus on Israel (Figure 1). This proportion is similar to the previous year (2016-17), with both years showing a distinct decrease from academic years 2013-2015 in the proportion of Fellows teaching Israel-focused courses.

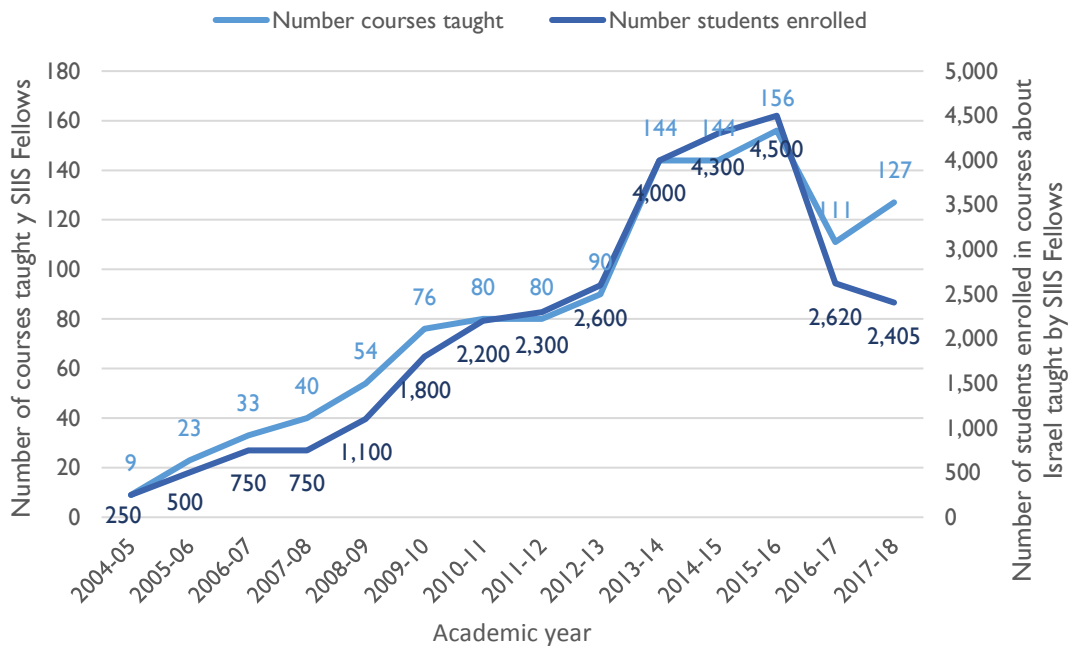
Figure 1: Number and proportion of SIIS Fellows teaching courses about Israel, by academic year



Source: 2018 survey and data for previous academic years taken from Shain (2018).

Fifty-four Fellows taught a single course about Israel, while 24 taught multiple courses. In total, 127 courses about Israel were taught by 78 Fellows. These courses reached an estimated 2,405 students (Figure 2). This brings the total number of courses about Israel taught by SIIS Fellows since 2004 to 1,167, and the total number of students enrolled to 30,075. Due to nonresponse from a substantial portion of Fellows, the data from the 2018 survey should be treated as minimum estimates. Some of the 104 SIIS Fellows for whom no information is available may have also taught courses about Israel.

Figure 2: Number of courses about Israel taught by SIIS fellows and number of student enrolled in these courses, by academic year



Enrollment numbers were rounded from 2018 survey responses which included estimates and ranges in the number of students.

Data for previous academic years taken from Shain (2018).

Course characteristics

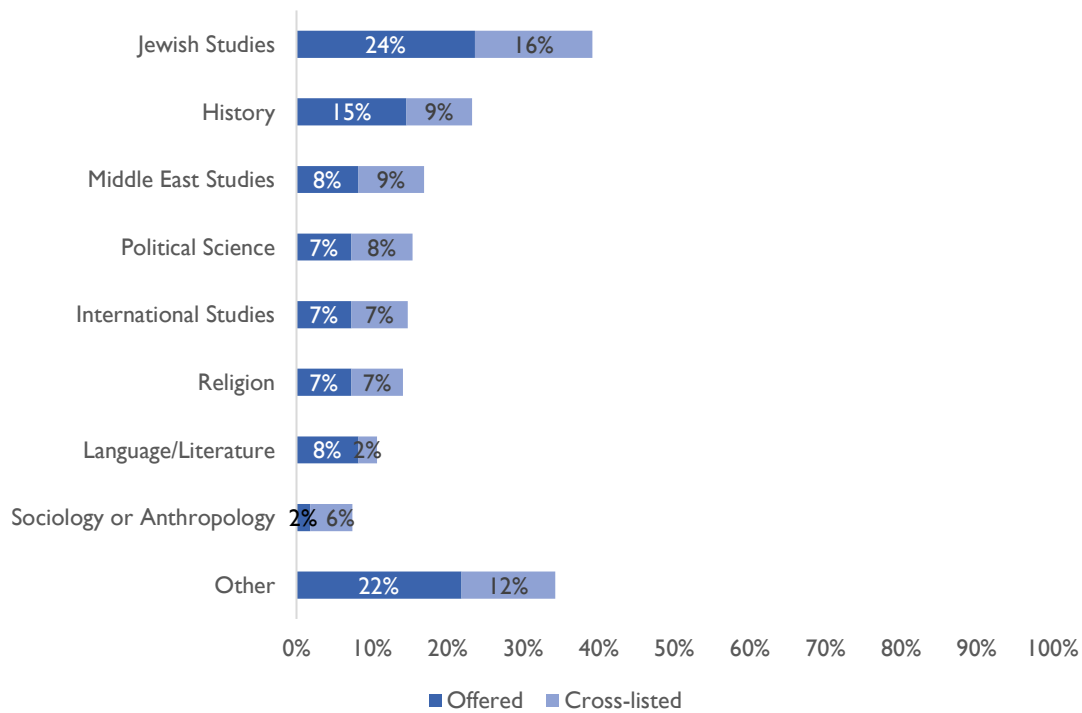
The majority of the courses taught by SIIS Fellows were taught exclusively to undergraduates (Table 3). Courses were offered by a variety of academic departments, including Jewish Studies, history, religion, and political science/government (Figure 3). The majority (76%) of the courses were also cross-listed in one or more departments. Jewish studies departments offered and cross-listed more courses than any other type of department. Other cross-listing departments included English, music/musicology, theology, military/command, law, and honors or professional programs.

Table 3: Course levels

Students taking courses	Proportion
Only undergraduates	65%
Both undergraduates and graduate students	17%
Only graduate students	18%
Total	100%

Source: 2018 survey. N=73

Figure 3: Departments offering and cross-listing courses

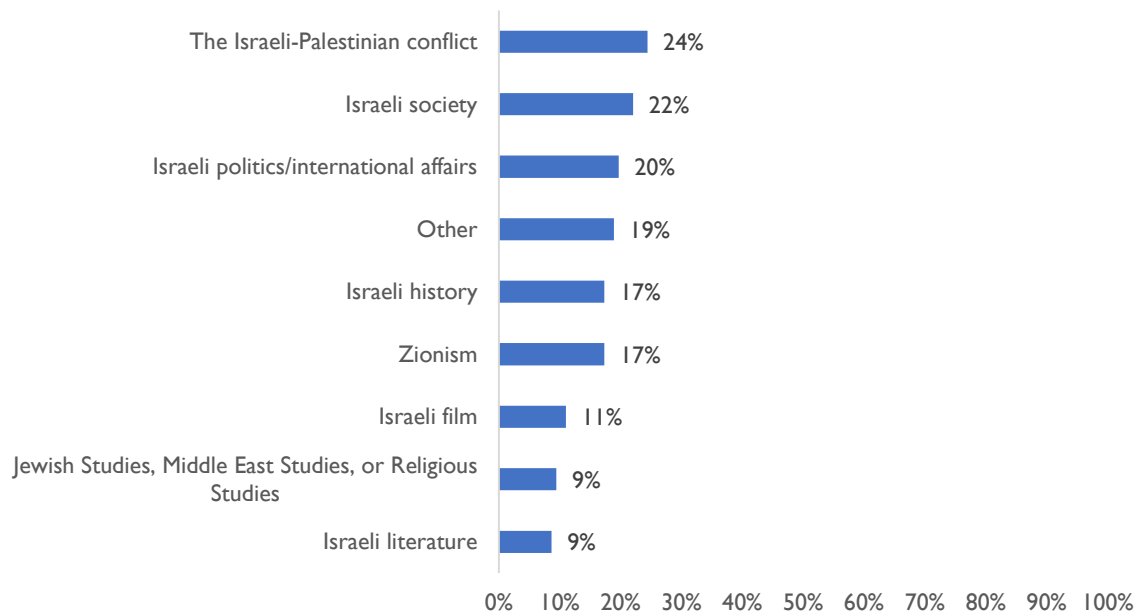


The Israeli-Palestinian conflict and Israeli history more generally were the most frequent subjects of courses (Figure 4). At the same time, no single area of content dominated courses that spanned disciplines from literature and film to politics and international affairs.

A little less than one quarter (21%) of the courses were taught for the first time by Fellows. This figure is on par with previous years (Shain, 2018).

Half of the courses (51%) fulfilled a requirement for the major or minor in the department in which they were taught. Over one third (40%) of courses fulfilled a core curriculum or general education requirement. Fewer than one-in-five (17%) courses fulfilled a requirement for non-Western studies or cultures, diversity or ethnic studies. Many universities, however, do not have such a requirement or do not count the Middle East as non-Western.

Figure 4: Courses' central area(s) of focus



¹ Source: 2018 survey.

² Each course has up to two central areas of focus.

Israel-related courses

During the 2017-18 school year, over half (63%) of those responding to the survey taught one or more classes that were not specifically about Israel but contained content influenced by SIIS. In response to an open-ended question about how SIIS influenced the content of these courses, Fellows mentioned specific books, knowledge, pedagogical approaches, and content they gained from the program. They also mentioned being able to share anecdotes and photographs from their time in Israel with the program.

I devote about a third of my modern Jewish history survey course to Israel-related issues. My understanding of these issues, and some of my lecture notes, are directly informed by my SIIS experience.

I drew extensively on the SIIS study trip to Israel, especially to give students a sense of chronology, geography, and sacred sites, and offered some Ma'aleh Film School films for some insight into tensions between orthodoxy and liberalism.

In teaching world religions, my experience with the SIIS edified course content pertinent to Judaism and modern Israel. Additionally, photographs and experiences from my travels to Israel with the SIIS were integrated into the course affording me the opportunity to share firsthand experiences with students.

My textbooks were suggestions of SIIS. My comments and discussions were all related to what I learned at SIIS.

I constantly come back to historical, cultural, and political scholarly texts from SIIS as reference works for students.

I employed more visual materials from Israel, ranging from ancient sites like Beth Shearim to the photograph of Adi Nes.

My SIIS experience helped to frame a more up-to-date perspective and set of issues to make my teaching more relevant.

I teach a course on Yiddish literature, and I am using methodology and information learned from the SIIS.

Campus Climate

The 2018 annual survey, for the first time, included questions on the campus climate toward Israel studies. An open-ended question, paired with a follow-up question, asked if the Fellows believed that the climate on campus had an impact on their courses in terms of enrollment, ability to offer a course, or in other ways. The survey also asked if Fellows saw changes in course enrollment in their department generally.

Over one-third of Fellows (37%) saw their campuses as neutral on issues of Israel/Palestine or did not see any impact on their courses.

I don't think there is much discussion of Israel on my campus.

My campus is not politically active. I find that most students are open to learning about Judaism and Israel-Palestine.

A minority (17%) perceived that their campus climate had a negative impact on their courses. Both faculty peers and students were seen as contributing to this negative campus climate. Often this negative climate was influenced by faculty and/or student activism in the form of protests or demonstrations and student government actions for the boycott, divestment, and sanctions movement (BDS) against Israel. Although Fellows noted a negative campus atmosphere around Israel politics, about one third of these Fellows mentioned that that environment had not affected their enrollment numbers.

Enrollment in Jewish and Israel studies course is at an all-time high this year. Political climate—some professors are very anti-Israel. When we have speakers, some in audiences display their anger at Israel.

Less and less patience with Israel's [government] policies. I am always having to qualify many statements about Israel, as if I need to make excuses for Israel.

There is a very active anti-Israel movement on campus. Among other things, its members promote BDS. Other students have responded in a number of ways to counter the BDS supporters. BDS has become a major issue in student politics. This has led to a tense and often nasty atmosphere on campus and brought unfavorable publicity to [University]. However, I have not found that it affected my course. We had no unpleasant moments in the course last term. I am not aware of pro-BDS actions in other courses in my department. However, there are colleagues who are hostile to

Israel, and their views likely are expressed in courses on the Middle East, Arab politics, the Arab-Israeli conflict, etc.

Twenty-two percent of Fellows framed the political climate on campus in a positive way. These Fellows noted that politics around Israel/Palestine, where part of the campus conversation, were “even-handed” with a civil approach.

My Department is slightly pro-Palestinian, but the overall atmosphere is very tolerant and any courses on Israel studies, Jewish studies or antisemitism are welcome and supported.

The political climate is quite good for Israel studies on campus and has little impact on the courses I teach.

Students are generally even-handed when it comes to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Another 20% of Fellows defined their campus climate as mixed. Some noted there were active groups on campus that influenced the conversation, both for and against BDS. While these politics did not directly influence their course enrollment or their teaching, Fellows nevertheless addressed the political climate in their teaching and their work with students.

Fairly neutral in general with some activism of different political positions. I take care to teach in as balanced a way as I can. Some of my students have particular questions along these lines, and I often meet with students individually to address them. This includes a wide spectrum of students, from those who think Zionism is white supremacist colonialism to those who fight BDS in their spare time.

Multiple interest groups and opinions; my class draws a variety of students, Jewish and non-Jewish; the students who enroll are open-minded and eager to learn.

Political climate related to Israel seems to be calm in general. Our Palestinian and Arab students do show their reactions against Israel on certain occasions. However, there seem to be no strong feelings against Israel notwithstanding their overall antipathy towards her. I did not feel deeply the impact of the political climate related to Israel in my courses.

Slightly better than in past years. I think the BDS movement on my campus has shrunk considerably or at least they are no longer very vocal. I find it heartening for lots of reasons, obviously, but it also makes me feel more comfortable about offering the course I designed through the SIIS Fellows program.

Department Enrollment

A quarter (25%) of Fellows reported a decrease in enrollment in their department, which many linked to a general decline in interest in the humanities. Almost as many (18%) have seen an increase in enrollment in their department. A further 43% have not seen any change in enrollment.

Other Academic Work with Students

A little over one quarter (28%) of SIIS Fellows reported that they work with students on Israel-related academic work beyond the classroom, serving as academic advisors (including study abroad advisors), thesis advisors, dissertation committee members, and student group advisors.

Other Activities across Campus

Over half (57%) of SIIS Fellows reported that they participated in some type of campus activity related to Israel but outside the classroom. This included participating in lectures, panel or roundtable discussions, film screenings and guest artist visits.

Research and Publishing

In the 12 months preceding the survey, 26% of SIIS Fellows presented original research related to Israel or had other roles related to Israel at academic conferences, and 35% published original scholarly work related to Israel.

Academic Conferences

About three quarters (74%) of SIIS Fellows are members of at least one academic organization. This includes 31% who are members of the Association for Israel Studies (Table 4). A little over half (57%) of SIIS Fellows attended an academic conference in the 12-month period before completing the survey, including 22% who attended the Association for Israel Studies 33rd Annual Conference in Waltham, MA in June 2017. Twenty-six percent of SIIS Fellows either presented original research related to Israel, or served as discussants or chairs on panels related to Israel at academic conferences.

Table 4: SIIS Fellows Membership in Academic Organizations

Academic Organization	Proportion Members
AIS (Association for Israel Studies)	31%
AJS (Association for Jewish Studies)	33%
MESA (Middle East Studies Association)	8%
Other academic organization(s)	41%

Source: 2018 survey.

Categories are not mutually exclusive.

Publications

In the twelve months before completing the survey, 24% of SIIS Fellows reported that they published original scholarly work related to Israel (e.g., books, book chapters, or articles in peer-reviewed journals), and another 20% reported other publications related to Israel (e.g., magazine or newspaper articles, book reviews, blog posts). SIIS Fellows' books covered topics including Israeli politics and anti-Zionism and BDS on campuses as well as other aspects of Israel society, history, and culture (Table 5).

Table 5: Books Published by SIIS Fellows in 2017-18

Title	Author(s)/Editor	Language
<i>Migration, Refugees and Human Security in the Mediterranean and MENA</i>	Boulby and Christie	English
<i>Cyprus, the Neighbouring Isle - The Cyprus Issue at the Israeli State Archives, 1946-1960</i>	Haritos	Greek
<i>The Jew in Czech and Slovak Imagination, 1938-89: Antisemitism, the Holocaust, and Zionism</i>	Kubátová and Láníček	English
<i>Anti-Zionism on Campus: The University, Free Speech, and BDS</i>	Pessin and Ben-Atar	English
<i>Points of Contact: Dance, Politics and Jewish-Arab Relations in Israel</i>	Rottenberg and Roginsky	Hebrew
<i>Politics in Israel: Governing a Complex Society</i>	Sasley and Waller	English
<i>Representations and Identities in the Jewish Diaspora: Essays in Honor of Professor Xu Xin</i>	Song	Chinese

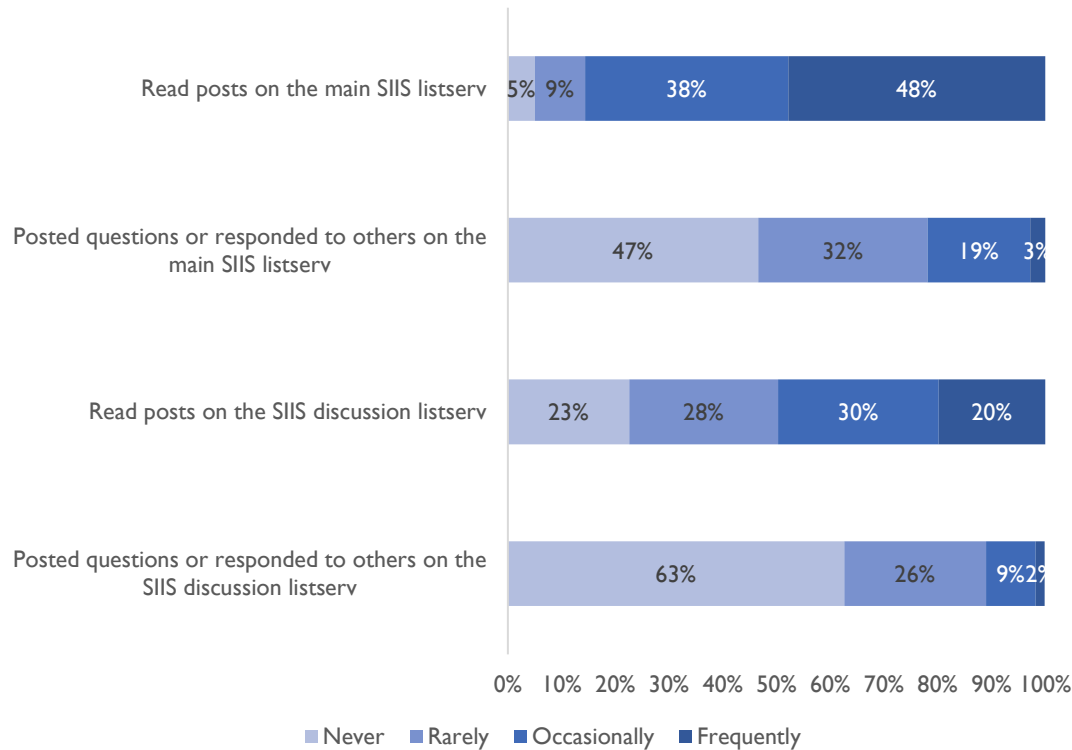
Continued Connections with SIIS

Each year the annual survey asks Fellows about their continuing connections to and use of Schusterman Center for Israel Studies resources and the SIIS community.

Using Schusterman Center Resources

The Schusterman Center for Israel Studies hosts two listservs intended as an online community for SIIS Fellows. The majority of SIIS Fellows reported using each SIIS listserv at least “occasionally,” and 48% used the main SIIS listserv “frequently” (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Frequency of using the SIIS listservs



In February 2017, the Schusterman Center announced its new Israel Studies Resource Site (israelresources.brandeis.edu). At the time of the survey at the end of the 2017-18 academic year, a majority (63%) of SIIS Fellows reported they had used resources from this website. The most used resources were course syllabi (43%), publications (22%), archives (18%), and databases (18%). Of those who used the site, the majority found it very useful (Table 6). Of those who had not, the majority said it was at least “somewhat likely” that they would use the site in the future (Table 7).

Table 6: Usefulness of israelresources.brandeis.edu (if used resources)

	Number	Proportion
Not at all useful	0	--
Not very useful	0	--
Somewhat useful	38	32%
Very useful	82	68%
Total	120	100%

Table 7: Likelihood of using israelresources.brandeis.edu in the future (if did not use resources)

	Number	Proportion
Not at all likely	3	5%
Not very likely	11	19%
Somewhat likely	36	62%
Very likely	8	14%
Total	58	100%

The Schusterman Center also offered four webinars for SIIS Fellows in the 2017-18 academic year:

- Sara Hirschhorn, “Conversation with the author: *City on a Hilltop, American Jews and the Israeli Settler Movement*” (October 31, 2017)
- Walker Robins, “Christians and the Jewish State—An Historical Overview” (November 29, 2017)
- James Loeffler, “Rooted Cosmopolitans: Jews and Human Rights in the Twentieth Century” (March 20, 2018)
- Gil Troy, “The Zionist Ideas: Visions for the Jewish Homeland—Then, Now, Tomorrow” (April 12, 2018)

Forty SIIS Fellows reported participating in at least one of these webinars, and eight SIIS Fellows participated in two or more. When asked what topics they would like to have covered in future webinars, responses ranged widely, including Israeli culture and the arts, gender and LGBTQ topics, Israeli-Palestinian conflict and politics, Arab and Israeli relations, and religion in Israel.

Going Forward

SIIS Fellows were asked what SIIS can do, going forward, to assist them in teaching about Israel. Most respondents were appreciative of the resources already available from the Schusterman Center and simply said “keep up the good work!” Others wanted more opportunities to connect with peer scholars and additional resources for their teaching and research.

I consider SIIS to have been critical in allowing me to develop my teaching/ research on Israel. One of the major challenges is to develop new and creative methods for teaching, and I would like to hear more about what colleagues are doing in this respect (not merely syllabi, although these are helpful) but actual critical description and analysis of pedagogical methods that can engage students effectively.

I think the current activities are very good. One other thing might be to help sponsor either research trips to Israel, or to help organize student trips to Israel with SIIS alumni.

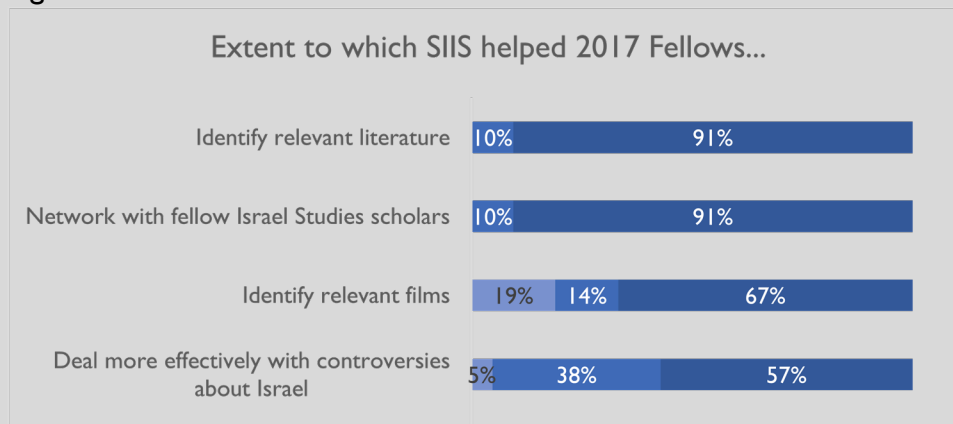
Make more material available online. From an underfunded European university most secondary and primary material is inaccessible. It's hard to broaden or deepen classes and topics.

Remind us regularly how to access the archives and all of the amazing offerings.

Reflections of Summer 2017 SIIS Fellows

The 22 Summer 2017 SIIS Fellows were asked how helpful SIIS was in a number of areas. They reported that SIIS was most helpful in its core missions, helping SIIS Fellows to identify literature and prepare syllabi (Figure 6).

Figure 6: 2017 Fellows' assessment of SIIS

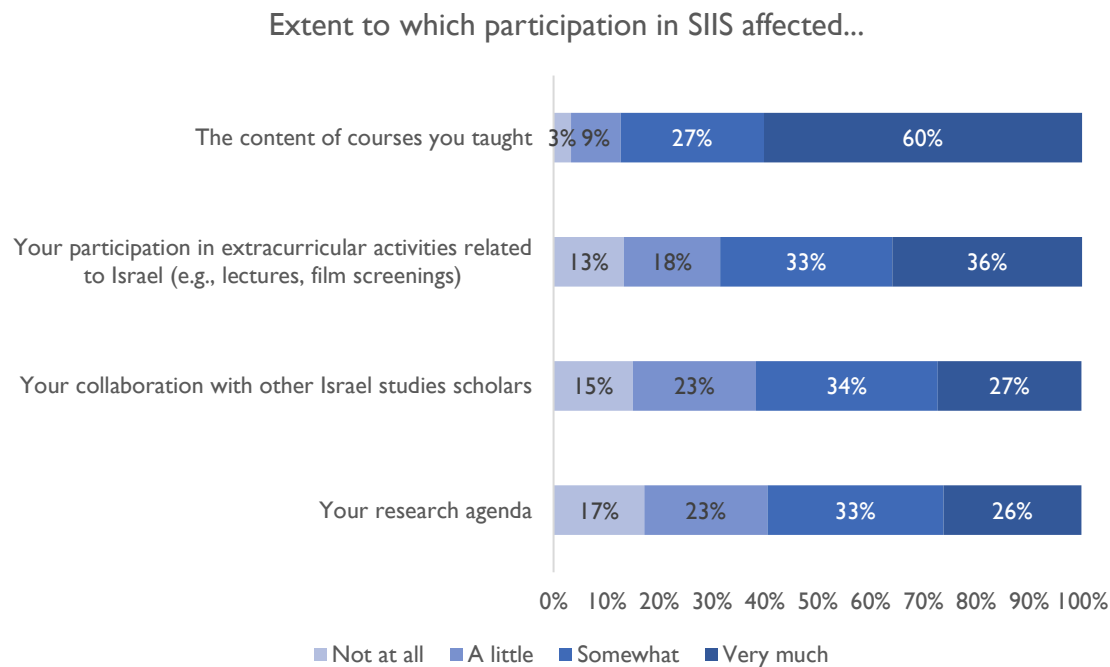


SIIS Fellows Assess Impact

At the end of the survey, all SIIS Fellows were asked to what extent their participation in SIIS affected them as teachers, scholars, and community members. The majority (60%) said that SIIS

“very much” affected the content of the courses they taught (Figure 7). Furthermore, the majority (69%) indicated that SIIS at least “somewhat” affected their participation in extracurricular activities related to Israel, their collaboration with other Israel studies scholars, and their research agenda.

Figure 7: Fellows’ assessment of SIIS impact



SIIS Fellows were also asked, in an open-ended question, if there were any other ways that their participation in SIIS affected their professional or scholarly pursuits. Most responses reiterated the four areas of impact listed in Figure 7: course content, participation in extracurricular activities, academic collaboration, and research agenda. Many Fellows mentioned the importance of gaining a cohort of peers in the field to whom they could turn for help or ideas. Several mentioned a significant impact on their careers such as making connections with research and teaching institutions and gaining a network of contacts through SIIS. The vast majority of the comments were very positive:

Because I am finishing an unrelated book project, I am looking around for another research area. I hope to spend spring semester 2019 in either Haifa or Tel Aviv, learning Hebrew in an ulpan and doing some preliminary research on potential research areas. I am keen to develop this new research, and I think a lot of this interest in Israel was generated by my SIIS experience, for which I am incredibly grateful. I am also planning to teach my SIIS course.

During our visit in Israel, I met with the professors and researchers of the Ben Gurion Research Institute. This coming October I will be doing research with them. SIIS has changed my life. I am so grateful.

Enabled me better to discuss Israel with students, faculty, administrators, and people in the [local] metropolitan area. Helped me know speakers to invite and Israel events to initiate.

I am more likely to continue to work on Israel knowing that I have a group of like-minded colleagues.

I applied to SIIS for the specific purpose to become more Israel-literate and the program did that beyond my expectations. I am very grateful.

I attended for pedagogical training, and it was fantastic. To an extent, I have a little more interest in Israel studies as a division of my general research, and it certainly strengthened my ability to teach “beyond the academy” in social media and public lectures.

I was able to get a job in Israel/Palestine studies due to my participation in this program.

Even though I am [in a different field], the SIIS was a personally rewarding and intellectually stimulating experience, and it networked me with important interlocutors in regard to Israel issues on campus. Although the outcomes for me do not necessarily correspond to specific outcomes that the SIIS tries to achieve, I believe that the SIIS should count me among its productive participants, not based on metrics connected with my teaching and personal activities, but in the context of advancing Israel studies at a sometimes unfriendly institution.

SIIS revolutionized my scholarship, research agenda and teaching: Israel became my prime focus. Thanks to SIIS, I now regularly teach courses on Israeli literature every year (nearly every semester) as the mainstay of my schedule. I have also been fortunate to work with Israeli scholars, in part thanks to SIIS introducing me to their work. Moreover, everything I have been able to do in Israel studies over the last 10 years was stimulated and supported by SIIS. I can never say thank you enough!

The SIIS changed my worldview because it was the first time in my life that I had the opportunity to study outside [South American country]. I met their excellent professionals and began to have an idea about the profession that I am now pursuing with all my enthusiasm. My MA thesis ... was about a topic that I heard about at SIIS, I moved to Israel in 2013, I am still in touch with colleagues from Brandeis and people that I met in different events related to Israel studies. The Schusterman Center for Israel Studies had a deep impact in my life.

Discussion

From its inception in 2004 through summer 2016, SIIS trained 269 college and university faculty members. Another 22 SIIS Fellows participated in summer 2017, bringing the total to 291. This report, the 14th in an ongoing, longitudinal study of the trajectories of the SIIS Fellows, has documented their continuing impact on the teaching of Israel on college campuses.

SIIS Fellows hold academic positions at more than 100 colleges and universities in the United States and across the world. In the 2017-18 academic year, SIIS Fellows taught 127 college or university courses specifically focused on Israel and reached an estimated 2,405 students.

SIIS Fellows' contributions to the field of Israel studies go beyond teaching. Many Fellows have published original scholarly work, including at least seven books in the 2017-18 academic year alone. Furthermore, by advising student groups and participating in campus lectures, panel or roundtable discussions, film screenings and guest artist visits related to Israel, Fellows have expanded discourse about Israel on campus beyond the classroom.

According to the SIIS Fellows, the Schusterman Center and the SIIS program specifically have contributed tremendously to their work in the field of Israel studies. The majority say that the SIIS experience strongly affected the content of the courses they teach. Furthermore, most use the main SIIS listserv at least occasionally, and most have either used the Israel Studies Resource Site (israelresources.brandeis.edu) and found it useful, or plan to use the site in the future. These findings point to the substantial and meaningful impact of SIIS.

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