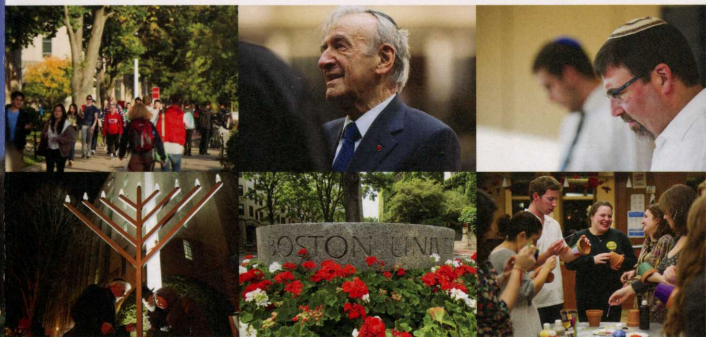


A Proposal

To support the creation of a Distinguished Visiting Professorship
in Jewish Thought and Literature
based at Boston University's Elie Wiesel Center
and the College of Arts & Sciences



Boston University College of Arts and Sciences



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Boston University seeks to create and endow a Distinguished Visiting Professorship in Jewish Thought and Literature, under the auspices of the Elie Wiesel Center for Judaic Studies and the College of Arts & Sciences.

By creating a prestigious visiting faculty position for renowned scholars, accompanied by a graduate research assistantship and a research fund, this endowed professorship will reinforce Boston University's role as a collector, interpreter, and promulgator of Jewish thought and literature. At the same time, it will celebrate and carry forward Elie Wiesel's compelling teaching mission at BU: a mission unique within the U.S. academic community.

Toward these ends, we seek an endowment of \$7 million.

The context of a gift: BU and Jewish Studies

Great institutions grow out of a strongly supportive context. The context for our proposed Distinguished Visiting Professorship in Jewish Thought and Literature is **Boston University**: an institution that over the past half-century has transformed itself into a top-tier private research university of international scope and impact, and which has long been committed to being a leader in Jewish Studies

With an enrollment of more than 30,000 undergraduate and graduate students, BU is the fourth-largest private university in the United States. We offer more than 250 degree programs through our 16 schools and colleges, ranging from business, liberal arts, science, and technology to professional programs, including law and medicine.

Ranked 41st among U.S. universities in *U.S. News & World Report*—up a full 10 places from the previous year—BU was recently admitted to the Association of American Universities (AAU), which comprises 62 of the leading public and private research universities in the U.S. and Canada. This certifies BU's place in the company of world-class institutions.

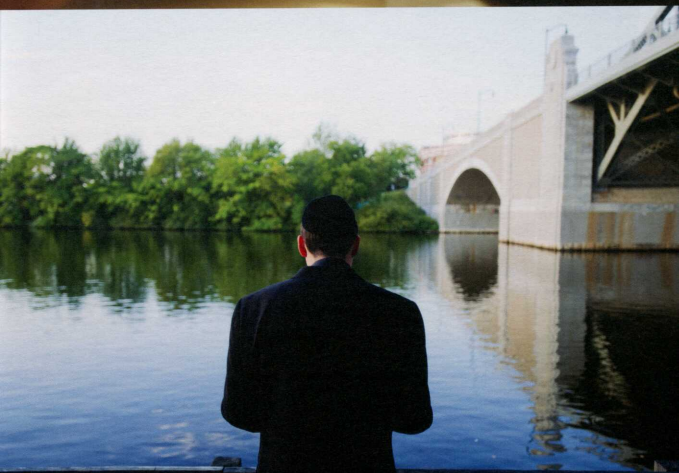
Boston University was established on principles of social justice, community service, and religious tolerance. From its founding, therefore, BU was open to students of all religions. It was also the first American institution of higher education to open all of its departments to women (in 1872). The University has graduated many luminaries, including Nobel Laureate Martin Luther King Jr. (GRS'55, Hon.'59), Pulitzer Prize winners, Guggenheim awardees, and MacArthur fellows. Today, BU's tradition of tolerance

and embrace of diversity continues. In 2013, for example—according to Hillel's College Guide—BU had the second-highest percentage of Jewish students among U.S. colleges and universities, ahead of schools like Yeshiva (#3) and Brandeis (#12).

BU has a distinguished history in Jewish studies. During the presidency of John Silber, the University attracted luminaries such as Gershom Sholem, Nahum N. Glatzer, Marvin Fox, Everett Fox, and Michael Fishbane to campus. Jewish authors, too, have long found a welcoming home at Boston University. They have included the late Saul Bellow, current creative writing faculty such as Leslie Epstein and poet-laureate Robert Pinsky, and Elie Wiesel, the 1986 Nobel Laureate for Peace. The University's Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center boasts significant archival research holdings pertaining to Jewish studies, among them the archive of Elie Wiesel and the Blau Archive (papers of the founder of Neturei Karta).

The **Elie Wiesel Center for Judaic Studies**—described more fully in the following section—honors the work and example of Professor Elie Wiesel, who has served on the BU faculty for nearly four decades.

In short, Boston University is a natural and fitting home for a new Distinguished Visiting Professorship in Jewish Thought and Literature.



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Why a visiting professorship in Jewish thought and literature?

The Elie Wiesel Center is a crown jewel among Boston University's academic resources. It already makes great things happen—and it can do still more.

First, we need to celebrate what the Center already does.

The Center facilitates and enhances academic study and research in all areas of Jewish history, culture, and religion. Its public programs, often in collaboration with other academic units, contribute to the cultural life of the greater Boston area and connect with other institutions of higher education. Its conferences, workshops, and associated scholarly collections support research that enhances our understanding of Jewish history, life, and letters.

It draws its faculty from a wide range of disciplines in the College of Arts & Sciences (CAS), where the Center is based, as well as from BU's Schools of Theology, Law, Medicine, and Public Health, and the Colleges of Fine Arts and Communication. This academic community includes distinguished senior scholars such as Elie Wiesel himself and a wonderful group of young faculty representing the next generation of scholars who will keep Jewish Studies flourishing. The Center's work is further enriched by visiting faculty in different aspects of Jewish Studies.

Undergraduate students from all BU schools and colleges take classes at the Center. Students interested in the academic study of Jewish history, culture, and religion can shape a broad program of study, and also have the opportunity to pursue an interdisciplinary minor in Jewish studies, administered through the Center. Graduate students from across the University also can affiliate with the Center.

With the expanded resources contemplated in the proposed Distinguished Visiting Professorship in Jewish Thought and Literature, the Wiesel Center will enrich Boston University's education and research in Jewish studies and the contributions BU can make to the Boston area in high quality Jewish studies programming.

The Distinguished Visiting Professorship in Jewish Thought and Literature will allow us to secure and build on the legacy of Elie Wiesel's presence and teaching at BU. Ever since he became the Andrew W. Mellon Professor in the Humanities at Boston University in 1976, Elie Wiesel has delivered a fascinating annual lecture series that has been open to the public and free of charge. These lectures have been the most popular and highly anticipated of their kind at BU, typically drawing a standing-room-only crowd of some 1,500 people. This past fall, for health reasons, Professor Wiesel cancelled the lecture series, leaving a serious gap in the life of our academic community and our evolving understanding of the issues closest to his heart.

The most appropriate way to celebrate Professor Wiesel's countless contributions is to expand his lecture series and put it on a permanent footing. These public lectures should speak to issues of contemporary relevance, including Jewish ethics and human rights. They should comprise contemporary Jewish thought and the literary imagination.

Securing the public outreach of the Wiesel Center will be achieved through the endowment of a visiting professorship—which will also enable us to reinforce and broaden our academic offerings. This professorship will be a prestigious and highly visible position that will enrich the intellectual and academic life on campus through lectures, research, teaching, and advising. Both the graduate research assistantship and the research funds associated with this position will ensure that it will attract scholars of the highest caliber, and also support world-class intellectual inquiries.

At a time of increasing specialization, it is important to bring scholars to campus who can speak to what it means to be human from within the repository of the ethos and wit of Jewish thought and literature. For many years, it has been Elie Wiesel who has carried out this teaching mission at Boston University. We would like to make sure that his vision continues to inspire future generations of students at BU.



Scholarly aptitude—and more

As a teacher and speaker, Elie Wiesel has brought the great figures of Jewish literary imagination to life as heroes, saints, and martyrs, but also as tricksters, humans wrestling with God, and complex individuals asking difficult questions. To weave together story-telling and scholarship, literature and philosophical ethics, rumination and engagement, as Wiesel does, requires more than scholarly aptitude. It is this “more” that this new position at Boston University will foster and maintain, as a challenge to students, colleagues, and the public.

Just as Elie Wiesel's work combines Hassidic mystical practice and a modern literary sensibility, this professorship will attract complex and accomplished talent to campus to bring the Jewish tradition alive in unusual and contemporary ways. The combination of a senior visiting professorship with a graduate research fellowship and funding for lectures and seminars will give this position the visibility it so richly deserves, and ensure that it secures the vitality of Jewish studies through future generations. As an endowment it will support Jewish studies scholarship from generation to generation, in perpetuity.



The proposal in detail

The proposed endowment in Jewish Thought and Literature will support four key program components:

- **A named visiting professorship.** This faculty chair, which will exist in perpetuity, will be funded at a level high enough to attract distinguished incumbents. We believe it is important to establish a visiting professorship to ensure a regular infusion of new ideas, and keep our intellectual agenda lively and challenging.
- **A named research fund.** This fund will underwrite traditional research activities, and—at the discretion of the visiting professor—also help underwrite symposia, lectures, panels, and other activities aimed at expanding the impact of the Center, both at BU and in the broader academic community.
- **A named lecture fund.** This endowment will allow us to carry forward Professor Wiesel's wonderful tradition of three public lectures each year, which have had such a profound impact on the University and the community.
- **A named graduate research assistantship.** This will provide a compelling research opportunity for a deserving graduate student to engage in meaningful collaboration with a leading scholar in his or her field—and will make the professorship more attractive to world-class candidates.

To accomplish these ends, we seek a total endowment of \$7 million.

CELEBRATING ACCOMPLISHMENT

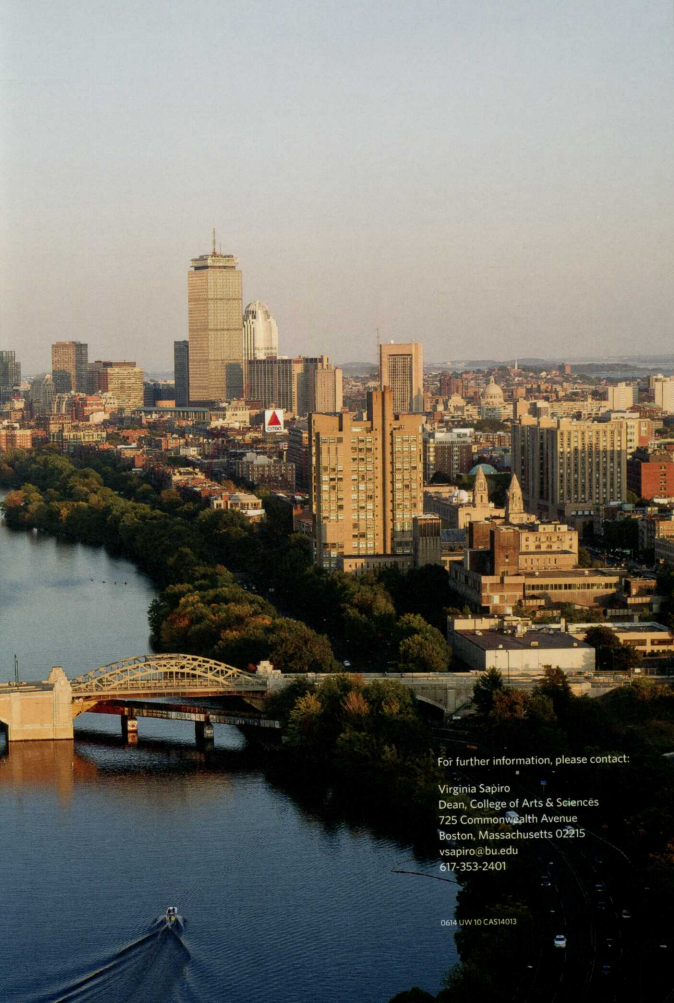
The proposed Distinguished Visiting Professorship in Jewish Thought and Literature represents a comprehensive response to both a challenge and an opportunity.

Our challenge is to institutionalize and carry on the magnificent work of Elie Wiesel, who for decades has set a standard of moral behavior and intellectual rigor that has positively impacted the BU community—and the world far beyond that community.

Our opportunity is to follow his example, and expand his agenda. The best way to celebrate past accomplishment is to accomplish still more.

Establishing a professorship of this scope and ambition will not only honor and perpetuate the many contributions of Elie Wiesel; it will strengthen the Wiesel Center, the College of Arts & Sciences, and the broader BU community.

We thank you for considering this proposal.



For further information, please contact:

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The Campaign for
Boston University

CHOOSE TO BE GREAT

