“What’s a Nice Jewish Book Group Doing in a Catholic University?”

THE BOOK GROUP AS A COMMUNITY OUTREACH TOOL

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AJL Proceedings 2016
Agenda

- Loyola Marymount University – background
- In the beginning...Jewish Studies & the ALA grant
- It’s all in the details
- Beyond the grant
- Collaborations
- Becoming a community
- Assessment
Loyola Marymount University

- Founded in 1911, a private Catholic university
- 7 colleges and schools including programs in Film & TV, Business, Education, the Sciences and Liberal Arts.
- 6,000 undergraduates / 2,200 graduate students
- 1,100 students @ Loyola Law School downtown campus
Tying into the Mission of LMU

Mission Statement

Encouragement of learning
The education of the whole person
The service of faith and the promotion of justice
In the beginning....

2007: “Jewish Studies has a very central place in a Catholic university.” —Dr. Holli Levitsky, Chair of the LMU Jewish Studies

2008: The Hannon Library receives an American Library Association grant, “Let’s Talk About it: Jewish Literature, Identity and Imagination”
Summer, 2008:
We advertised on campus & in local newspapers;
Worked with 2 local libraries to promote book group;
Purchased books and hire facilitator with grant money.

Sept. 2008: We began!
It’s all in the details...

- Sunday afternoons @ 2pm
- meet Spring/Fall semesters
- light refreshments
- compensated faculty led discussion
- fiction, non-fiction mostly...
- local authors
- *New!* film screenings
It’s all in the details

• Facilitator is asked to prepare approx. 30 minutes of background material, i.e. author biography, historical period of book, themes in book, characters, genre

• discussion questions

• handouts, Powerpoint, bibles, etc.
It’s all in the details

It’s a discussion Group...
Let’s talk!
Collaborations

Shared mailing lists with Jewish Studies department, giving our members access to a variety of campus activities.

Shared mailing list with the Library Outreach team, giving our members access to all library events, exhibits, etc.
Collaborations

Increased visibility for our faculty!

Reached out to CSUN to enlarge the pool of speakers.

- a new neighborhood partner

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Becoming a Community

THE SNOWY DAY
AND THE ART OF EZRA JACK KEATS

AWAKE & SING!
BY CLIFFORD ODETS

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Group Fieldtrip: “Light & Shadows: The Story of Iranian Jews” The Fowler Museum @UCLA, 2013
Group Fieldtrip: The Los Angeles Museum of the Holocaust, 2015
Group Fieldtrip: August, 2016

State of Deception: the Power of Nazi Propaganda
Exhibit produced by the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum
@ LA Public Library
“I am a member of another Book Club where all the members are Jewish so it was all the more interesting to me to be able to discuss books with people from religious backgrounds other than my own.”

“Having facilitators with relevant backgrounds is so helpful in understanding the book. It’s going back to school with no homework just the enjoyment of books and learning.”
“I was not expecting a Jewish book group at a Jesuit College.”

“It sounded unique. I liked the idea that it was held at a university with many resources, both professional and literary.”

“I think the group adds a wonderful dimension to the LMU community.”

“I enjoyed all the ancient history and learning more about Jewish history. Helpful to me as a Catholic.”
“I was excited to expose myself to books that I would never have picked up - also, the discussions are always far reaching and mostly on a higher level than a standard book club - the best part is not having to write a 10,000 word critical essay!!”

“I am so impressed that Loyola University, a Catholic School, has a chair of Judaic Study and sponsors this book group. I really enjoy hearing the opinions of people from different religious backgrounds than my own.”
Thank You!

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