The Jewish Law Institute at Touro College Jacob D. Fuchsberg Law Center provides an academic framework for the study and application of Jewish law within the context of the American legal system. Under the leadership of Samuel J. Levine, Professor of Law and Director, the Jewish Law Institute is recognized as the premier center throughout the United States for exploring the relevance of the Jewish legal tradition to American legal scholarship, legal education, and legal practice. In achieving this mission, the Institute serves the needs of a number of diverse yet interconnected constituencies, including the legal academy, local and national Jewish communities, and students pursuing their legal education at Touro Law Center and beyond.

About the Director

Professor Samuel J. Levine joined the Touro Law Center faculty in 2010 as Professor of Law and Director of the Jewish Law Institute. He previously served as Professor of Law at Pepperdine University School of Law. He has published more than forty law review articles in the areas of Jewish law, legal ethics, criminal law, law and religion, and constitutional law.

Professor Levine’s articles have appeared in numerous law reviews, peer-reviewed journals, textbooks and anthologies. His scholarship has been included in course adoptions in the United States and Israel, has been cited by courts in the United States and New Zealand, and has been cited by scholars in the United States, Israel, England, Canada, Australia, Germany, and Austria.

Professor Levine has delivered a number of public and endowed lectures, and he has spoken at law schools across the United States and at conferences in Paris and Israel. Professor Levine received a J.D. from Fordham Law School, graduating cum laude and Order of the Coif, and an LL.M. from Columbia Law School, graduating with Highest Honors as a James Kent Scholar. He then served as an appellate prosecutor in the Kings County District Attorney’s Office, as a law clerk to United States District Court Judges Loretta A. Preska and David N. Edelstein in the Southern District of New York, and as an adjunct professor at Fordham Law School. He has also taught at St. John’s University School of Law and at Bar-Ilan University.

Click here for his Bio.
The Jewish Law Institute provides educational programs and opportunities for synagogues, community groups, and individuals within local and national Jewish communities. Professor Levine lectures widely in academic and communal venues, both in Long Island and across the United States, addressing important issues in Jewish law and American law, while the Jewish Law Institute regularly hosts groups and individuals from Jewish communities in Long Island and the broader New York area.

Visitors to Touro Law Center have access to the school’s extensive Judaica Collection, which represents the single most comprehensive library in Long Island, Brooklyn and Queens, encompassing the various fields of: Jewish law and philosophy; Jewish history; the Holocaust; Israel and modern Israeli law; and American Jewish life and culture. The Judaica Collection serves as a valuable resource for Touro law students and faculty, as well as the broader community of rabbis and scholars and other individuals pursuing research in Jewish law, history, and culture.

In addition to the permanent collection, Touro Law’s Judaica holdings include the Lillie Goldstein Traveling Judaica Collection, established to promote the teaching of Jewish law in American law schools by making available to law schools the resources necessary to offer courses in Jewish law.

The Central Islip Cemetery Restoration Project

The Jewish Law Institute has entered into an agreement with the New York State Office of Mental Health to embark upon the Central Islip Cemetery Restoration Project. Through this project, Touro Law Center will help maintain a Jewish cemetery, which currently sits adjacent to the Law Center for patients from nearby psychiatric hospitals. The Jewish cemetery is part of a larger cemetery, which serves as the resting grounds for approximately 5,000 former patients of the Central Islip State Hospital. The project aims to help restore the larger cemetery as well.

The project represents an important piece of the Jewish Law Institute’s ongoing mission of serving the needs of Jewish communities and the broader community-at-large. At present, the cemetery is not accessible to the public, the monument that memorializes the Jewish section of the cemetery has been defaced, and the gate around the Jewish cemetery is rusted and in a state of disrepair.

The project aspires to restore the cemetery in a way that will allow it to be open to the public for visitation as a place of reflection, consistent with respect for the interred. The proposed name for the Jewish cemetery is Central Islip State Hospital Memorial Park: Bais HaChaim-Chesed shel Emes. This translates as the House of Eternal Life and True Kindness, and was the name originally given to the Jewish cemetery.

In addition to serving the ideals of kavod hameit—respecting the dead—and serving the local community, the project aims to assist relatives of patients buried in the cemetery. While fully respecting the privacy of those relatives who wish to maintain confidentiality, the project will assist family members who would like to locate patients buried in the Central Islip State Hospital Cemetery.

The project has been featured in media outlets including Newsday and the Jewish Week.

Click here to read more.
The Jewish Law Syllabus Project

The Jewish Law Institute has established the Jewish Law Syllabus Project to help facilitate the increasing attention to Jewish Law in American law schools. With the continuing emergence of Jewish Law as an area of focus in both the American law school curriculum and American legal scholarship, recent years have seen an expansion of law school courses and centers dedicated to exploring various aspects of Jewish Law. Through the Jewish Law Syllabus Project, the Jewish Law Institute has compiled a collection of syllabi from Jewish Law courses, providing an important resource for scholars who are interested in undertaking the teaching and study of Jewish Law, as well as for those who are currently pursuing these fields.

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Touro Law Students

The Jewish Law Institute provides students the opportunity to examine Jewish law and its relevance to American legal practice. In addition to offering courses in Jewish Law, the Institute hosts lectures and conferences that feature leading lawyers and law professors who carefully explore the place of religion in the practice of law.

Touro Law Center boasts an active Jewish Law Students Association, whose members work closely with the Jewish Law Institute in planning and participating in events organized by the Institute. On a curricular level, Professor Levine’s Jewish law courses are popular among students, and several students have written independent papers under Professor Levine’s supervision.

The Morris E. Fischer, LLC Scholarship is awarded to a full-time student who earns the highest mark in the Jewish Law class and demonstrates a strong appreciation for the importance and contributions of Jewish Law. The annual scholarship was established in 2012 by Touro graduate Morris E. Fischer, Esq. ’95 as a token of his gratitude to his Jewish heritage and to Touro Law Center, which fostered a nourishing and supportive environment for him in some of the most formative years of his professional and personal life.

The recipient of the 2013-14 award is David Greenberger, a recent graduate. Mr. Greenberger stated, “I extend my heartfelt appreciation and gratitude to Professor Samuel Levine, Mr. Morris Fischer, and Touro Law Center for the opportunity to further my interests in Jewish Law throughout my tenure in law school. I am proud to be the recipient of this prestigious honor.”

“David has a strong appreciation for the importance of Jewish Law and has made significant contributions to the field through his independent study project as well as his participation in programs and events at Touro Law,” said Touro Law Professor Samuel Levine, Director of the Jewish Law Institute. “I am so pleased he has received the Morris Fischer award in recognition of his contributions.”
On April 8, 2014, the Jewish Law Institute hosted a trial court program for students from the Jewish Academy. For several months, faculty and students from Touro Law Center worked with 6th and 7th graders at the Jewish Academy, the only Jewish day school in Suffolk County, to prepare for the trial.

The program provided middle school students the unique opportunity to play an active role and experience the American legal process with the guidance of a law professor and law students, while at the same time learning about similarities and differences of Jewish and American law.

The program was designed to teach middle school students about both Jewish and American law, and is intended to serve as a model for similar programs at Jewish day schools across the country.

Above, photo of seventh graders from the Jewish Academy Day School in Suffolk County.

In an effort to expand on this work within the legal academy, the legal community, and the broader Jewish community, the Institute has established The Jewish Law Institute Distinguished Lecture Series. Distinguished Lecturers include prominent law professors, lawyers, and rabbinic scholars, who address the interplay between Jewish law and the American legal system.

The Jewish Law Institute organizes conferences that focus on a wide range of subjects of interest to Jewish legal scholars and Jewish lawyers, as well as the broader legal academy, the practicing bar, and the Jewish community. The conferences include lectures and presentations by leading lawyers, judges, legal scholars, and religious thinkers from across the United States.

This year’s programs will be announced shortly. Most of the programs are open to the public and free of charge. Stay in touch to learn of exciting developments for the coming year.

The Jewish Law Institute is always available for programming, events and speakers. If you are interested, please contact Professor Samuel Levine at slevine@tourolaw.edu or call (631) 761-7138.

Please Donate to the Jewish Law Institute: Join us in achieving our mission. Get involved in our programs and support our work in the law school, the community, and the legal academy. When making a gift, please select The Jewish Law Institute under Giving Options. To donate, please click HERE.