



University of Colorado
Colorado Springs

The Sephardic and Crypto-Judaic Studies Program

—a scholarly affiliation of the University of Colorado-Colorado Springs & the Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies

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Overview

In particular, this endeavor aims to foster collaborative scholarly research on Sephardic Jews (Jews of Spanish and Latino-descent) and crypto-Jews (Sephardic Jews that retained their faith in secret) in the greater Southwest United States and the world. The affiliation aims to promote greater interdisciplinary work among the *UCCS* faculty and student body, the *SCJS*, the community of southern Colorado, international scholars, and members of the Sephardic community. Additionally, the affiliation seeks to engage Latino students and community members into a vigorous discussion of related issues of culture, religion, and identity. It will be the first university-based program in the United States that fosters the integration of university scholars and students, community members, and an international association for the purposes of studying, discussing, and disseminating information on this cultural-religious phenomenon.

About UCCS

UCCS provides a broad range of degree programs in the liberal arts and sciences as well as professional programs in business, engineering, nursing, education and public affairs. Approximately 225 tenured or tenure-track faculty and 524 instructors/lecturers, adjuncts, and clinical/research faculty compose the faculty at *UCCS* and the university currently offers 36 bachelor's degree program, 19 master's degree programs and five doctoral degree programs. In the fall of 2013, *UCCS* welcomed 9,777 students on campus, a record-high enrollment. Forty percent of enrolled students are first-generation college students and 22% are minority. The Department of History offers both a Bachelor of Arts as well as a Master of Arts.

About SCJS

Since the creation of the *SCJS* in 1991 by Rabbi Joshua Stampfer, Dr. Stanley Hordes, and playwright Rena Down, the *SCJS* has established itself as the preeminent association dedicated to fostering research on the historical and contemporary development of Sephardic crypto-Jews. Likewise, it provides a venue for the descendants of crypto-Jews, scholars, and other interested parties to network and discuss pertinent issues. Among the primary successes of the *SCJS*'s twenty-one continuous years of service are:

- An annual society conference focused on presenting a venue for crypto-Jews, scholars, and other interested parties to discuss the history and contemporary lives of crypto-Jews.
- Publication of *HaLapid*, the journal of *SCJS*, which offers a broad range of literary pieces, scholarly articles, and personal narratives.
- Collaboration with Dr. Abraham D. Lavender and *Florida International University* in the creation of the academic, peer-reviewed *Journal of Spanish, Portuguese, and Italian Crypto-Jews (JSPICJ)* in 2009.
- Establishment of the *Sosin-Stratton-Petit Foundation Program* that directly nurtures and funds the visual and performing art initiatives of the *Society*.
- Establishment of the Randy Baca-Dennis Duran Fund, funding the conference attendance of individuals exploring potential Sephardic heritage, to support their research.

2013-2014 SCJS Program Endeavors

- **It is Official.** Via a *Memorandum of Understanding* agreed to by nine signatories from UCCS and SCJS, the affiliation came into effect on 23 January 2013. Our emphasis on interdisciplinary collaboration (Languages and Cultures, History, Humanities, and Philosophy) creates a broad base of support.
- **Master of Humanities under development.** During spring 2013, Dr. Martinez will collaborate with Dr. Teresa Meadows (UCCS) to create a Master of Humanities program that will allow for the interdisciplinary study of crypto-Judaism. Currently, graduate students in the UCCS Department of History can write a Master's paper on crypto-Jewish history.
- **2013 Research Fellow.** Dr. Seth Ward (U. of Wyoming) has accepted the title of Research Fellow from the program for 2013. In his capacity as Research Fellow, Dr. Ward will be granted a stipend to facilitate his research and writing on contemporary crypto-Jews in Colorado and New Mexico. Dr. Ward will make up to two presentations on his work at UCCS this spring 2013/fall 2013.
- **23rd Annual Conference of the Society for Crypto Judaic Studies (28-30 July 2013).** Beginning this year, the SCJS' annual conference will be held at the UCCS every other year (2013, 2015, etc.). Among our speakers this year are Dr. Jane Gerber (CUNY-Graduate Center) and Dr. Gretchen Starr-LeBeau (University of Kentucky). A call for proposals is available at: <http://cryptojews.com>.
- **The Extremaduran Sephardic Genealogy Database.** Funded by *The International Institute for Jewish Genealogy (IIJG)* and *Paul Jacobi Center* at the *National Library of Israel*, this project aims to synthesize unpublished, archival evidence on late 14th through early 16th century Jewish and *converso* families in the region of the Extremadura. Tracing the origins and movement of the Sephardim is one of the greatest challenges that historians and genealogists encounter. Not only are we frustrated by the effective lineage masking efforts of Jews and *conversos* intent on concealing their identities, but also the difficulties of locating the fragmentary primary sources that reveal their transformation. A solution to the problem of tracking the transition of Jewish lineages during the era of anti-Jewish pogroms, "cleanliness of blood" statutes (*limpieza de sangre*), and the Spanish Inquisition, lies concealed in an unusual location – the manuscripts held in Spanish cathedral and municipal archives. Within these Catholic and royally-created institutions, both of which were intent on eradicating Judaism from Spain, are the foundational documents that detail the origins of the Sephardic community that filtered into Portugal and the Atlantic World. You can read more about the project at: <http://www.rogerlouismartinez.com>.
- **Curating the New Mexico History Museum's May 2015 exhibition – "Expressions of Complex Identities: Sephardic Jews, Conversos, and Crypto-Jews (1391-2015)".** This bilingual exhibition, opening on May 24, 2015, will focus on the cultural and religious history of Sephardic Jews, *conversos*, and crypto-Jews. It will explore the period from the late medieval to modern periods (late 14th through 21st centuries) and will journey from Spain, into the Atlantic world, and reach its final destinations in Mexico and New Mexico. The exhibition will be developed with partners in Spain, Portugal, Mexico, and New Mexico and will trace the conditions of Jewish life in Spain that led to the diaspora from the Iberian Peninsula. The showing will include documents and artifacts from Spanish, Portuguese, Mexican, and New Mexican sources, as well as photographs, paintings, and other art forms that present the Sephardic experience and the formation and persistence of Jewish identity in New Mexico. The exhibition will include a published bilingual catalogue and will be supported by a full year of programming through lectures, musical performances, and dramatic readings. Lastly, the NMHM will hopefully collaborate with other museums in the United States so that this traveling exhibition will be on display on both the west and east coasts. The exhibition will be presented in five chronologically arranged thematic areas.