

# The University of Michigan Regents Communication

## Request for Action

### Subject: Report of Faculty Retirement

#### Action Requested: Adoption of Retirement Memoir

**Elliot Ginsburg, Ph.D.**, associate professor of Jewish thought, Department of Middle East Studies and associate professor of Judaic studies in the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, retired from active faculty status on May 24, 2026.

Professor Ginsburg received his B.A. degree from the University of Illinois in 1974, his M.A. degree from the University of Pennsylvania in 1980, and his Ph.D. degree from the University of Pennsylvania in 1984. He served on the faculty of Oberlin College (1985-1991) prior to coming to Michigan. He joined the University of Michigan as an associate professor in 1991 with a dual appointment in Middle East Studies and Judaic Studies. He served as director of various programs and as interim director for the Frankel Center for Judaic Studies in 1996 and 2001.

In 1989, Professor Ginsberg published his classic study, *The Sabbath in the Classical Kabbalah*, subsequently reprinted in 2008. It marked his emergence as a scholar of Jewish mysticism, a subject that he taught for Judaic Studies along with other courses on myth, ritual and symbol in religion. He also taught more broadly on dimensions of Jewish spirituality, including a famous course on the American Jewish philosopher, Abraham Joshua Heschel. His engagement with study of the senses, especially smell, and on the meanings and practice of prayer in Jewish tradition, infused both his teaching and writing. Students gravitated to study with him, enthralled with his deeply expressive mode of speaking. Professor Ginsberg also reached out to diverse audiences beyond the academy, especially taking on responsibilities for training rabbis through the ALEPH program where he directed its mysticism track. He was generous with his time and served on the Judaic Studies Executive Committee, helping to lead the program through its expansion and diversification.

A gifted teacher and dedicated mentor, Professor Ginsburg taught novel courses in Jewish history, religion, and mysticism. He's received numerous honors and grants from various associations, foundations and institutions, as well as several fellowships, such as the Wornom grant (2020), Kellogg grant (2003), and Frankel fellowship (2010). He was a member of the Association for Jewish Studies, World Union for Jewish Studies, and American Academy of Religion.

The Regents now salute this distinguished faculty member by naming **Elliot Ginsburg, associate professor emeritus of Jewish thought, Department of Middle East Studies and associate professor emeritus of Judaic studies.**

Requested by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jon Kinsey". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

**Jon Kinsey**

Vice President and Secretary of the University

May 2026