



RAMAPO COLLEGE OF NEW JERSEY
Office of Development
Press Release
July 20, 2022

Contact: Angela Daidone
adaidon1@ramapo.edu

Jacob Ari Labendz named Director of Gross Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies at Ramapo College

MAHWAH, N.J. – Ramapo College of New Jersey has named Jacob Ari Labendz as director of the [Gross Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies](#).

Dr. Labendz, a New Jersey native, is a scholar of Jewish history and culture with a research focus on Jews in and from Central Europe in the twentieth century. He contributes actively to discussions around nationalism and diaspora, the state management of Jewish minorities, antisemitism, and Jewish food cultures.

Labendz stated that his goal as director is for the Gross Center to remain and improve as a resource to help the campus and regional communities “grapple productively with the horrors and lasting legacies of the Holocaust and genocide.”

“I am hoping to reflect upon my many years of experience teaching in the fields of Holocaust and Jewish studies to offer dynamic, enriching, and thought-provoking courses for our students, whom I am committed to centering in our programming,” Labendz said. “I hope to integrate more overseas and regional study-trips into our curriculum and co-curricular programs.”

Labendz added that he expects to maintain and expand the high-quality programming that the Ramapo campus and local communities have come to expect of the Gross Center and to integrate Holocaust and genocide studies across the College through partnerships with other academic, cocurricular, and administrative units. “I hope to offer students and faculty members from all disciplines meaningful, creative, and substantive opportunities to become

involved with the Center and to assume responsibility for learning and acting in the face of human atrocities,” he said.

Labendz has held research and teaching positions at the Center for Research on Antisemitism in Berlin, Charles University in Prague, Penn State and Youngstown Stet university. He also is a Wexler Graduate Fellow and received a Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation award, along with a dissertation completion grant from the Foundation for Jewish Culture.

In addition to articles and book chapters, Labendz published two edited volumes, *Jewish Veganism and Vegetarianism: Studies and New Directions* with Shmuly Yanklowitz (SUNY, 2019) and *Jewish Property since 1945: Cultures and Economies of Ownership, Loss, Recovery, and Transfer* (Routledge, 2017). He earned his Ph.D. in history from Washington University in St. Louis in 2014 under the direction of Hillel Kieval. Labendz has a passion for combining intriguing scholarship with consequential community outreach.

The mission of the Gross Center, founded in 1980, states: *Our mission is to assist students, educators, and the community-at-large in learning the history and lessons of the Holocaust, the Armenian Genocide, and other tragedies. Through innovative educational programming we seek to promote an understanding of the pernicious consequences of anti-Semitism, racism, ethnic hatred, other forms of bigotry, and violations of human rights; and forge awareness, change attitudes, and introduce new methodologies for the protection of individual liberty and the prevention of genocide.*

Under Labendz’s direction, the Gross Center will continue to offer a lecture series, along with other programs both on and off campus, virtually and in person. Members of the community are invited to contact the Center to be placed on its email list or to seek a partner for community events in the region. The Center will post its fall 2022 schedule as soon as possible, <<https://www.ramapo.edu/holocaust/>>.

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Ramapo College of New Jersey is the state’s premier public liberal arts college and is committed to academic excellence through interdisciplinary and experiential learning, and international and intercultural understanding. The College is ranked #1 among New Jersey public institutions by College Choice; is recognized as the state’s top college on the list of Best Disability Schools by *Great Value Colleges*; was named one of the 50 Most Beautiful College Campuses in America by *CondéNast Traveler*; and is recognized as a top college by *U.S. News & World*

Report, *Kiplinger's*, Princeton Review and *Money* magazine, among others. Ramapo College is also distinguished as a Career Development College of Distinction by CollegesofDistinction.com, boasts the best campus housing in New Jersey on Niche.com, and is designated a "Military Friendly College" in Victoria Media's *Guide to Military Friendly Schools*.

Established in 1969, Ramapo College offers bachelor's degrees in the arts, business, data science, humanities, social sciences and the sciences, as well as in professional studies, which include business, education, nursing and social work. In addition, the College offers courses leading to teacher certification at the elementary and secondary levels, and offers graduate programs leading to master's degrees in Accounting, Applied Mathematics, Business Administration, Contemporary Instructional Design, Computer Science, Creative Music Technology, Data Science, Educational Leadership, Nursing, Social Work and Special Education, as well as a Doctor of Nursing Practice.