

Charles Phelps Taft Research Center
at the University of Cincinnati
Faculty Release Fellowship Application

Each section (I-V) should be placed at the start of a new page. All required materials must be included in a single document, uploaded to the electronic submissions system, no later than 5PM on the published day of the deadline. This program requires a letter of support from the department head and an evaluator external to UC. Applicants should submit their application with enough time for the letters to be uploaded to the submissions system prior to the close of the deadline. Taft does not accept an obligation to review applications that have not received the required documents by the close of the deadline.

I. General Information

- a. Name: XXX
- b. M#: XXXXXXXX
- c. Department: History
- d. Position: Professor
- e. Project title: "America's Rabbi: Stephen S. Wise" (Book Project)
- f. Brief Summary of Requested Support:

I am requesting a Faculty Release Fellowship as an extension of my upcoming sabbatical leave in AY2020-21. The release will enable me to complete my work on a book project titled "America's Rabbi: Stephen S. Wise."

- g. Probable Results of a Grant (such as external funding, publications, and presentations):

The Faculty Release Fellowship will result in the publication of my book project. It may also help to leverage one or more external grant possibilities to which I have applied with the hope of making research trips to the FDR Presidential Library (Hyde Park, NY), the David Ben-Gurion Archives and Library (Sde Boker, Israel), and the Chaim Weizmann Archives (Rehovot, Israel).

- h. Other Funding Applied For or Received for This Project (list source and amounts requested and awarded):

The following applications for research support in AY2020-21 are currently pending: (a) Visiting Professor Fellowship, Lady Davis Fellowship and Trust, Technion-Israel Institute of Technology (\$6000.00); (b) International Fellowship in Jewish Studies, Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture (\$5000.00); (c) UC International Faculty/Staff International Incentive Grant 2020 (\$4800.00); and (d) Jack Shand Research Grant, Society for the Scientific Study of Religion (\$5000.00).

II. Project Proposal

Description. My book project, a full-scale biography, traces Rabbi Stephen S. Wise's (1874-1949) meteoric ascent as a pioneering leader of liberal American Judaism, Jewish-Christian relations, immigrant rights, women's suffrage, ethnic politics in the United States, and modern Jewish politics in the global arena. Shaped by the dynamic environment of the Progressive era, Wise was closely associated with Louis D. Brandeis, Woodrow Wilson, Albert Einstein, Eleanor Roosevelt, and Franklin D. Roosevelt. Meanwhile, in the Jewish orbit he worked intimately with Zionist leaders Theodor Herzl, Chaim Weizmann, and David Ben-Gurion. Indeed, he participated actively in American and world Jewish politics in the first half of the 20th century, including virtually every significant social justice enterprise in the United States and the international campaign for Jewish statehood which led to the creation of Israel in 1948. Over time, Wise became not only a major force in the public arena but a superlative exemplar of the modern American religious leader. In many respects, his trajectory anticipated that of Billy Graham, Martin Luther King, Jr., and other outsized religious-political figures.

A few basic questions motivate my research. For example, how did Wise's social-religious vision inform his path as a modernizing American Jewish leader? What was the source of his political power and how did he synthesize the competing agendas of liberal idealism and Realpolitik? Finally, what was the impact of his political activism and leadership in the American setting and on the Zionist movement? The answers to these questions reveal the unique dimensions, strengths, and limitations of religiously inspired leadership among ethnic and minority groups in American society. In sum, while my objective is to write a critical biography of Wise and evaluate his impact as a towering Jewish leader, a related goal is most certainly to use Wise as a lens through which to view American Jewry's rise and transformation in the 20th century.

Structure and Contents. The book project is organized chronologically and thematically. The overarching narrative traces the life and career of Stephen S. Wise, with an emphasis on key developments in American and Jewish history from the 1870s to the mid-20th century. The table of contents is as follows:

1. Introduction
2. Budapest
3. Native Son

4. Oregon Frontier
5. In the Arena
6. Brandeis, Wilson, and the Jewish Vote
7. Zionism and the Great War
8. Liberal Judaism and the American Scene
9. Pulpit, Politics, and Progressivism
10. Relief, Rescue, and Realpolitik
11. World War II and the Holocaust
12. Road to Jewish Statehood
13. Last Days
14. Conclusion

Progress to Date. I have completed drafts of chapters 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, and 11. Additionally, I have published five articles/chapters (based on drafts, respectively, of chapters 3/4, 5/6, 8/9, and 10/11): (a) "Stephen S. Wise and the Urban Frontier: American Jewish Life in New York and the Pacific Northwest at the Dawn of the 20th Century," *Quest: Issues in Contemporary Jewish History* 2 (September 2011), n.p., <http://www.quest-cdecjournal.it/>; (b); (c) "The Rise of Stephen S. Wise as a Jewish Leader" in *The Individual in History: Essays in Honor of Jehuda Reinharz*, eds. ChaeRan Freeze, et al (2015), 143-162; (c) "The Public Political Theology of Stephen S. Wise," *CCAR Journal: The Reform Jewish Quarterly* (Summer 2019), 17-35; (d) "Stephen S. Wise and Golda Meir: Zionism, Israel, and American Power in the Twentieth Century" in *Reappraisals and New Studies of the Modern Jewish Experience: Essays in Honor of Robert M. Seltzer*, eds. Christian Wiese and Brian Smollett (2014), 356-387; and (e) "Idealism, Vision and Pragmatism: Stephen S. Wise, Nahum Goldmann and Abba Hillel Silver in the United States" in *Nahum Goldmann: Statesman Without a State*, ed. Mark A. Raider (2009), 139-168. The peer review process and responses from colleagues to my published work has been important and instructive. The process of working out fully developed components of the project has given me the chance to test out some key ideas, themes, and narrative strategies.

Rationale. The extant work on Wise dates to the 1960s and is largely adulatory. The notable exception in this regard is Melvin I. Urofsky's 1982 biography, *A Voice That Spoke for Justice: The Life and Times of Stephen S. Wise*. Though smart and well written, Urofsky's work is now outdated. Since its publication, the United States National Archives and Records Administration has declassified significant World War II-era records of the State Department, Office of Strategic Services, Federal Bureau of Investigation, and other agencies. It is also important to emphasize the extent to which the field of modern Jewish history as a whole has matured, including the subfield of Jewish biography. The breadth and depth of scholarship in this regard is vast and provides an enormous reservoir for me to draw upon. Finally, the expansive research opportunities stemming from the digitization of the Anglo-Jewish press, pre-state Israeli society's Hebrew language press, the Jewish Telegraphic Agency archive, and other print media cannot be overstressed.

Project Schedule. If awarded a Faculty Release Fellowship, my academic leave will be organized as follows:

Fall 2020 -- Generate complete working drafts of chapters 2, 7, 12, 13, and 14. Note: I am working steadily on creating preliminary drafts of the foregoing chapters and will continue to do so through the summer 2020. By the start of fall 2020, I expect to have much of this material in manageable form. Next, I will spend the first half of the year fleshing out complete drafts of the chapters (that is, roughly one chapter per month). In addition to my ongoing work with materials housed at the American Jewish Archives (Cincinnati, OH), I hope to make strategic visits to the FDR Presidential Library (Hyde Park, NY), Ben-Gurion Archive (Sde Boker, Israel), and Chaim Weizmann Archive (Rehovot, Israel) to track down some specific items held by the latter institutions.

Spring 2021 -- Generate a unified and complete working draft of the book manuscript. Note: In the spring 2021, I plan to put the finishing touches on the complete manuscript, edit the narrative for consistency, and prepare the project as a whole for submission to an academic press for consideration for publication.

Project Significance. Stephen S. Wise is one of those rare historical figures that stood at the very crossroads of American and Jewish history. He was shaped by both his European cultural inheritance and his American upbringing -- and his rise and career were intertwined with the progress, promise, and convulsions of American society and Jewish life in the 20th century. Not surprisingly, Wise features as a significant player in biographical studies of Brandeis, Wilson, Weizmann, FDR, Ben-Gurion, and others. He is also a pivotal figure in American Jewish history, American religious history, Holocaust history, and Zionist history. Against this backdrop, my biography project seeks to provide a critical and balanced portrait of Wise and in so doing explore his impact on American society and the course of modern Jewish history. My hope is to produce a full-scale biography that will be a meaningful and constructive contribution to the world of scholarship as well as a point of pride for the University of Cincinnati and the Taft Research Center.

III. Budget

a. Requested Research Supplement:

I would appreciate receiving a research supplement in the amount of \$1500.00 to help defray travel expenses associated with round-trip travel to the FDR Presidential Library (Hyde Park, NY), Ben-Gurion Archive (Sde Boker, Israel), and Chaim Weizmann Archive (Rehovot, Israel). The approximate costs of airline tickets (per Travelocity) in this regard are:

- Domestic airline ticket -- CVG-JFK @ \$300.00

- International airline ticket -- CVG-TLV (Ben-Gurion airport, Israel) @ \$1200.00

IV. Taft Grant History:

Please list your grant history with Taft for the last 5 years, in reverse chronological order. Please list project title, the name, date, and amount of award, as well as development of the project subsequent to the grant, e.g. publication.

(1) Dec 2018 -- Competitive Lecture Award (\$2000.00). Support for visiting conductor/composer Maestro Lucas Richman (Bangor Symphony Orchestra); lecture series on "Leonard Bernstein, Stephen Sondheim, and Music in American History" (Apr 2019).

(2) Dec 2018 -- Competitive Lecture Award (\$2000.00). Support for visiting scholar Prof. Kambiz GhaneaBassiri (Reed College); lecture series on "American Islam in Historical Perspective" (Mar 2019).

(3) Dec 2017 -- Taft Conferences and Lectures Committee Award (\$8000.00). Support for international conference on "Re-Thinking the Balfour Declaration: Zionism, American Jews, and World War I in Historical Perspective"; cosponsored by the American Jewish Archives, HUC-JIR (May 2018).

(4) Nov 2017 -- Competitive Lecture Award (\$3500.00). Support for visiting distinguished scholar Pres. Jehuda Reinharz (Mandel Foundation & Brandeis University); keynote lecture on "Chaim Weizmann: Architect of the Jewish State, 1917-1948" (May 2018), part of international conference noted in item #4.

(5) Feb 2016 -- Publications Costs Grant (\$1500.00). Support for cost of index, artwork, and permissions agreements associated with publication *The Essential Hayim Greenberg: Essays and Addresses on Jewish Culture, Socialism, and Zionism* (University of Alabama Press, 2016).

