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Noted Scholar to Tour Tennessee

***Stephen Whitfield featured in the
Southern States Literary Series***

November 20, 2005, Jackson, MS – How did a seemingly provincial story of Eastern European Jews become one of the most beloved musicals in American history, performed and applauded by people of all ethnic and religious backgrounds? Who better to answer this fascinating question than Dr. Stephen Whitfield, the Max Richter Professor of American Civilization at Brandeis University and one of the nation's leading experts of American popular culture. The Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life is pleased to announce that Dr. Whitfield will discuss "*Fiddler on the Roof* as History" in Murfreesboro, Jackson, and Chattanooga, Tennessee as part of its 2005 Southern States Literary Series.

Opening on Broadway in 1964, *Fiddler on the Roof* was the first significant musical to depict the vanished world of eastern European Jewry of half a century earlier. By the time the work closed eight years later, its run had outlasted every musical in American history. Based on the Yiddish short stories of Sholem Aleichem, *Fiddler on the Roof* raises important questions of why audiences around the world responded so enthusiastically to this story of a Jewish family pressured by forces of modernization and anti-Semitism. *Fiddler on the Roof's* impact cannot be understood merely within the framework of the middle-class American Jewish audience at which the creators were pitching this enduring work of the musical theatre. Dr. Whitfield will explore how the play's universal themes have resonated with audiences around the world.

On Thursday, December 8th at 7:30 p.m., Dr. Whitfield will be at Linebaugh Library in Murfreesboro. On Saturday, December 10th at 7:00 p.m., his will speak at Lambuth University in

Jackson, TN in celebration of the 120th anniversary of the B’Nai Israel Temple. He will conclude the tour on Sunday, December 11th at 2:00 p.m. at the Jewish Cultural Center in Chattanooga, Tennessee.

The ISJL’S Southern States Literary Series features discussions and book signings with leading scholars and authors of the Jewish experience. Each author in the series travels to several cities, creating a vibrant literary circuit throughout the Institute’s twelve-state region. Dr. Whitfield’s lecture is part of a series of programs celebrating the 350th anniversary of Jewish settlement in America.

This program is sponsored in part by the Tennessee Humanities Council with funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Jewish Community Federation of Greater Chattanooga. Co-sponsors include the B’Nai Israel Temple of Jackson, TN. This presentation is part of the American Jewish Icons national lecture series sponsored by the National Foundation for Jewish Culture with major support from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

The Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life has its roots in the work of the Museum of the Southern Jewish Experience. The organization is dedicated to providing educational and rabbinic services to small Jewish communities, documenting and preserving the rich history of the Southern Jewish Experience, and promoting a strong Jewish cultural presence throughout a twelve-state region.

All of the events are free and open to the public. For further information contact the Institute of Southern Jewish Life at (601) 362-6357.