

# Jonathan Steinberg, History

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DEATHS

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*Jonathan Steinberg*

Jonathan Steinberg, emeritus professor in the School of Arts and Sciences' department of history, died on March 4. He was 86.

Dr. Steinberg received an AB at Harvard College and a PhD from Cambridge University (where he studied under F.H. Hinsley, who had helped to crack the ENIGMA machines at Bletchley Park). Before starting graduate studies at Cambridge in 1961, Dr. Steinberg served briefly in the U.S. military and then worked at the E.G. Warburg Bank in New York City. He spent the first part of his academic career at Trinity Hall, a constituent college of Cambridge University. There, he served as fellow and director of studies in history from 1966 to 1999, and vice-master from 1990 to 1994. While at Cambridge, Dr. Steinberg wrote on twentieth century Germany, Italy, Austria, and Switzerland, and prepared the official report on the

Deutsche Bank's gold transactions during World War II. He lectured on European history since 1789, specializing in the German and Austrian Empires, Nazi Germany, fascist Italy, and modern Jewish history. He published several books (his first, in 1965, was an expansion of his dissertation), served as the co-editor of *The Historical Journal*, and wrote and produced several BBC radio documentaries. Dr. Steinberg also served as an expert witness in the Commonwealth of Australia War Crimes prosecution.

In 2000, Dr. Steinberg came to Penn, where he was appointed the Annenberg Professor of Modern European History (*Almanac* October 31, 2000 (<https://almanac.upenn.edu/archive/v47/n10/SASchairs.html>)). Dr. Steinberg also held appointments in the Jewish Studies Program and the College of Liberal and Professional Studies. While at Penn, he continued to research, write, and lecture widely on European history. He was the chair of the history department from 2001 to 2004 and was well-known for getting to know students personally and encouraging their research pursuits. From 2009 to 2011, he edited the *Cambridge History Tripos*. His 2011 biography of Otto Von Bismarck was short-listed for the BBC Samuel Johnson Prize for Non-Fiction in 2011 and short-listed for the Duff Cooper Prize in 2012. In 2015, Dr. Steinberg retired from Penn and took emeritus status.

"Jonathan was an intellectual of great acuity, capacious range, and boundless curiosity," says his former colleague, Warren Breckman, Sheldon and Lucy Hackney Professor of History. "He believed in the power of facts and had many at his disposal; but he also had a penetrating analytical mind. He could startle with mention of the most arcane of works, but typically the surprise came from the illuminating relevance of the reference, not from its obscurity; and like a good chess player, he often seemed one or two moves ahead of his interlocutors."

"The intellectual acuity evident in Jonathan Steinberg's scholarship was matched by the generosity with which he mentored his undergraduate students," says Melissa Teixeira, CAS'08, now an associate professor of history. "As I find myself back at Penn, now as an assistant professor in the very same department where I once studied with Jonathan, I can grasp from an entirely new vantage point what made him such an extraordinary teacher. He inspired with his intellectual range and his endless suggestions of books for students eager to learn more. Conversations with Jonathan were never one-sided, as he was eager to listen to his students, to learn from their reflections on a particular book or subject. He leaves me with an exceptional model for the type of mentor and teacher that I aspire to be."

"Jonathan was exquisitely attuned to his interlocutors," says colleague D'Maris Coffman, chair in economics and finance of the built environment at University College London. "He had an almost preternatural sense for 'where students were' and could meet them more than half-way. With undergraduates and graduate students alike, he could grasp almost instinctively how the student understood a subject or a problem, and could direct us to further readings or draw our attention to areas that required further thought. The questions Jonathan raised and the seriousness with which he pursued them have stayed with me for over a decade, even as I have moved away from history into economic geography, economic analysis, and infrastructure economics."

"He was a charismatic teacher, whose lectures on nineteenth and twentieth-century Europe drew many students, including a large following of senior associates," says Dr. Breckman. "He was a caring and dedicated teacher and mentor to many of our graduate students. Above all, he was a lustrous and enlivening presence in our community, bringing intellectual gravity and, occasionally, levity to our proceedings."

Dr. Steinberg is survived by his partner, Marion Kant.