UMd. student receives Gildenhorn Scholarship

by Jan Zelvey
Staff Writer

University of Maryland’s Joseph and Alma Gildenhorn Institute for Israel Studies recently awarded junior Michelle Thomas with its first Gildenhorn Family Scholarship in recognition of her pursuit of an Israel Studies minor. The institute plans to offer the scholarship every fall semester.

Thomas, a double major in biochemistry and physiology and neurobiology, was originally a religious studies minor and said she first became interested in Israel when she took an elective about politics and religion about the country. She said her lecturer, professor Joseph Ringel, was fantastic and expanded her interest from theology to Israel and its culture and people.

"As I’ve never been to Israel before, I am thrilled for my first trip," — Michelle Thomas, recipient of the first Gildenhorn Family Scholarship

For the class, she wrote an essay about civil development in Israel, its relationship with traditional religion and how other groups view its future. She adapted the paper to the online scholarship application that requires an essay and an optional letter of recommendation from a professor. Paul Scham, a UMD professor and the executive director of the Gildenhorn Institute, says Thomas, one of his former students, was chosen because of her excellent essay and academic record. Thomas will be spending spring semester in Haifa, taking courses as part of the university’s Maryland-in-Haifa program.

The Gildenhorn Institute was established in 2006 as a means of presenting courses and programs related to all aspects of Israel and its relations with other Middle Eastern countries. It offers 15 courses a year that are taken by about 500 students, Scham said.

"The goal of the institute is to increase awareness of Israel in an absolutely nonpartisan way," Scham said. "We have a lot of Muslim and Arab students who take our courses because we’ve cultivated and have a reputation of offering balanced views on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. I think we’ve developed a reputation for fairness."

For more information about the Gildenhorn Institute and its programs, go to israelstudies.umd.edu.

The Upside of Down-sizing... the thought of downsizing may seem stressful, but there are many upsides that are overlooked. The freeing of expenses is beautiful, and includes everything from accessibility to retail and transportation, one-level living, lower maintenance and expenses, neighbors with similar interests and more. It also is a great opportunity to de-clutter and simplify at a time in life when you can be focused more on leisure and less on daily tasks. There are often more community amenities to enjoy as well, which can build new friendships and provide accessibility to helpful resources. Many of our UGMs find downsizing to be a temporary mantis, and their final regret is that they wish they downsized sooner.

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Washington Jewish Week | January 23, 2014