Getting to know Dr. Michael J. Kelly **Lecturer, Judaic Studies UUP Executive** Committee member, Campus **Transportation and** Parking Committee, and running for position of

Representative of

Contingent Faculty

As an academic, I'm a recent Fulbright Fellow to Ireland (2022, UCC) and Senior Research Fellow at the University of Hamburg in Germany (2021), and was, prior to Binghamton, an Associate Lecturer in Early Medieval History at the University of York (UK). I was also a Visiting Professor of Medieval Mediterranean History at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem and a visiting lecturer on a few other campuses in the UK.

My research operates at the intersection of history, religion and theology, and the emergent interdisciplinary field of Bitcoin Studies. At the core of my work is the examination of how humans connect the abstract to the real and how/why we assign meaning and value both to the products of that union and the processes by which it is achieved. A current research project of mine is the examination of the first dual fungible/non-fungible minted currencies and how that informs our understanding of currency, value, and humanness. For the Fulbright, I produced two research articles eliciting an early medieval origin of Antisemitism, which was a product the Visigothic-Catholic Church's theological and religious desire to define "human nature".

Otherwise, in recent years, I've led a number of research events related to the study of value and currency, at the American Numismatic Society and elsewhere, and on campus at Binghamton I am pioneering the new (Web3) Digital Humanities and decentralized Data Science as part of the unofficial Bitcoin Studies "program" and the official Religious Studies program. I'm also a developer in Bitcoin, creating green energy processes for people to heat their homes and mint their own sovereign currency, all as part of our Bitcoin Studies' revolutionizing of the Digital Humanities and the preservation of Jewish pasts. For the latter, we are now connecting with the Shoah Foundation on other campuses and Chabad to expand the use of blockchain in safeguarding Judaism and Jewish pasts.

QUESTION & ANSWER

Tell me about your job and why you love what you do?

The students are the reason for being a faculty member: their energy, their inquisitiveness, their creativity, and also their real need for direction in these formative years are what inspire me, provide meaning to my work on campus, and fill me with hope for the future of society. Hillel famously claimed that "love thy neighbor" is the entire Torah and that the rest is commentary. I say that the students are campus, and everything else is either music or noise.

How did you get involved with UUP?

In my early 20s, I was a lead contract negotiator and office steward for the SEIU in the City of Boston, but left that when I went off to pursue my PhD and travel the world. My experience with unions in the US, though, had demonstrated that anything resembling a radical labor movement in the US was only a fantasy, with a totally lethargic supposed-/pretend workers' Party and unions more interested in preserving the status quo. But when I met UUP reps in Binghamton and really encountered what they were doing, felt their energy and then witnessed the boldness of Binghamton UUP members to take a strong political stance for human rights in the face of strong opposition, then, then my faith in American unionism was restored and I am very excited to be reinvolved.

How do you make a difference?

In Boston, when I was a neighborhood (Hyde Park) rep for the City of Boston, my focus was on public transportation and how cities, states and corporations design and fund public transportation in ways that embolden the wealthy and marginalize the working class: Boston is a perfect example - just look at its subway system which has a (Green) Line that runs deep into its wealthiest suburbs (e.g., Brookline, Newton, Wellesley) but has no regular line(s) that run into the working-class neighborhoods of the actual City of Boston, such as Roslindale, Hyde Park, Readville, Mattapan, and much of Jamaica Plain. This is on purpose: it prevents easy access for working people to the core of the City, in partnership with businesses downtown, and forces working people to use more of their resources simply to get to work in town. As a formerly progressive US candidate once said, "it's expensive to be poor": public transportation can be used to reinforce that or to mitigate that.

My new role on the transportation committee on campus for the UUP won't be able to address such massive issues as a large public transit system, but I am looking forward to addressing the same core issues: what are the class disparities with transportation and parking on this campus and how do we fix them, now.

And beyond that, but not unrelated, my work with Bitcoin is focused heavily on teaching people and small businesses how to recycle energy and heat to actually earn wealth and self-sovereignty by reducing overall energy consumption and not having to ever rely on the whims of politicians for security. And, in fact, our BU Bitcoin Studies lab, in March, will have an incredible guest speaker, Zach Cohen, a student researcher who is working on re-democratizing public infrastructure with Bitcoin.

What about your community engagement; any hobbies?

In addition to all things Bitcoin, from the new Digital Humanities and decentralized Religious Studies to heat recycling to DeFi incentivizing educational engagement, I love skiing, everything basketball, perusing used-bookstores, anything Quebec, vegan recipes, and am now starting to learn how to fly a plane toward earning my pilot's license