The course, which completed its first semester in the fall, received positive feedback from students. One student said, “Working on the project was a great experience. I was amazed by the wide range of applications of machine learning in various aspects of our lives.”

Russell reports that several faculty members from computer science departments at other colleges and universities across the nation have already become affiliated with the project and committed to using the material being developed.

Greenberg Honored at Fall Commencement

“Treat the world as if it really is perfect—and with a passion, help to heal it and make it better. Accept a responsibility to future generations,” said businessman and longtime University of Hartford supporter Arnold C. Greenberg to graduates at the Fall Commencement ceremony on Dec. 5. Greenberg was honored at the ceremony with the University Medal for Distinguished Service.

Addressing approximately 120 graduates in Lincoln Theater, Greenberg encouraged them to learn to manage change, develop a system of personal values, and appreciate humor and irony while enjoying the simple beauty of life. He also reminded graduates to listen, not to procrastinate, and to learn to be generous. “You will find such great satisfaction in giving of yourself. Trust me, living generously brings joy to the soul,” he said.

In fact, generosity has been a significant part of Greenberg’s life. He is the founder of the university’s Maurice Greenberg Center for Judaic Studies and is a member and former chairman of the board of regents. Greenberg, who also received an honorary Doctor of Laws from the university in 1989, is a private investor, business consultant, and former chairman and chief executive officer of Coleco Industries, Inc.

In addition to his service to the university, he is a leader in Hartford’s Jewish community and has long been active in supporting the arts in Greater Hartford.

In 2001 he and his wife, Beverly, donated $1 million to establish the Greenberg Junior Faculty Research Grant program, which provides grants to promising young faculty members for research and professional development.

At the ceremony, graduates processed into Lincoln Theater to receive their degrees as family and friends watched. The Fall Commencement ceremony is designed for students who have completed the course work for their degrees but are unable to attend the university’s traditional Commencement in May.

“Today is bittersweet. I am sad to leave this great institution, but I am happy to move on to the next step in my life,” said Kati Liss, a graduate who received a bachelor’s degree in English.

Novelist Depicts Hasidic Life

Pearl Abraham appeared in Wilde Auditorium as part of the Cardin Reading Series during February. A professor of writing at New York University, Abraham read passages from her recently published book, The Seventh Beggar. The novel takes its inspiration from a famous unfinished story, “Tales of the Seven Beggars,” told by Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav, a 19th-century Hasidic master, storyteller, and charismatic whose cult following persists to this day.

Born into a Hasidic family with Yiddish as her primary language, Abraham is known for her painful depictions of this strict Jewish sect. Hasidic Judaism places many restrictions on its followers, especially women. Abraham’s two previous novels, The Romance Reader and Giving Up America, have had female protagonists who struggled with these rigid beliefs and traditions. Although the author has broken away from Hasidism, she insists that she is not out of touch with that world. “I still live in it to an extent,” she said.

The Seventh Beggar has a complex plot involving three main characters who push against the confines of a restrictive religious upbringing in order to create something. In the telling of her tale, Abraham experiments boldly with the novelistic form. The stories within stories are effective but complicated. When confronted about the complex structure, of her book, the author responded, “I don’t think you need background information to understand the story. It’s for everyone. The communities [depicted in the novel] are like any other community—but with restrictions.”

Despite Abraham’s intimate and sometimes shocking portrayal of Hasidic beliefs, she said she is not judgmental of her former religion. “My job as a novelist is to show all sides. I am not critical of that world. The novel is a depiction rather than an argument.”

The Cardin Reading Series, established in 2001, is named for its sponsor, university alumnus and regent Richard Cardin ’62.