

Jewish Studies Fall 2017 Course Descriptions

COMPARATIVE LITERARY STUDIES (COMP_LIT)

COMP_LIT 279-0-20: Modern Jewish Literature in Translation

M. Gealy, MWF 11:00 – 11:50

(See JWSH_ST 279 for description)

COMP_LIT 279-0-21: Introduction to Yiddish Culture: Literary Images of the Shtetl

M. Moseley, TTH 3:30 – 4:50

(See JWSH_ST 266 for description)

GENDER STUDIES (GNDR_ST)

GNDR_ST 382-0-20: Gender and Race in the Holocaust

S. Cushman, MW 9:30-10:50am

(See HISTORY 393-0-26 for description)

GNDR_ST 390: Jews and the Transgender Moment

B. Wimfheimer, MW 11:00 – 12:20pm

(See RELIGION 339-21 for description)

GERMAN

GERMAN 266: Introduction to Yiddish Culture: Literary Images of the Shtetl

M. Moseley, TTH 3:30 – 4:50

(See JWSH_ST 266 for description)

HEBREW

HEBREW 111-1: Hebrew I

H. Seltzer, MTWTH 11:00-11:50am

This is a course in elementary modern Hebrew. The course is designed to develop all four language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) and an explicit knowledge of Hebrew grammar. Class work centers on learning new vocabulary and grammatical structures. These are introduced and exercised orally in anticipation of dealing with written dialogues and essays. Drills in the texts and on audio files expand and reinforce the new material. Independent lab work is part of the coursework.

HEBREW 121-1: Hebrew II

H. Seltzer, MTWTH 1:00-1:50pm

This is an intermediate level course in Hebrew. The purpose of the course is to enlarge the student's vocabulary and to reinforce and expand his/her knowledge of Hebrew grammar in order to improve conversational and writing skills as well as the ability to handle literary texts from biblical to modern.

HEBREW 216-1: Hebrew III: Topics in Hebrew Literature

H. Seltzer, TTH 9:30-10:50am

This is an advanced level course in Hebrew. Literary works from Old Testament to contemporary Hebrew prose and poetry will be read, discussed and analyzed orally and in writing. Northwestern students should have completed and received credit for Hebrew 121-3. New students must have permission of the instructor.

HISTORY

HISTORY 203-2: Jewish History 1492-1789

Y. Petrovsky-Shtern, MW 11:00 – 12:20pm

In 1492, the Spanish Catholic Kings issued a decree that banished Jews from the Iberian Peninsula and allowing those who convert to stay. In 1789, the French Revolutionary Parliament accepted Jews as legal citizens ushering in the era of Jewish emancipation. This course explores three centuries of radical changes that triggered the rise of more tolerant political and religious treatment of and attitude toward Jews. We will concentrate on the following major issues: the early modern era of mercantilism that reshaped the Jewish community economically and culturally; the legalization of the process of readmission of Jews to urban centers from which they were expelled in medieval times; the spread of Jewish mysticism and the rise of Jewish religious revivalist movements; the impact of French Enlightenment on the rise of modern Jewish thought; the formation of Sephardic and Ashkenazi Jewish identity; and the revolutionary upheavals in the Netherlands, Britain, and France that triggered the process of emancipation that bolstered Jewish integration into the fabric of European society.

HISTORY 393-0-26: Gender and Race in the Holocaust

S. Cushman, MW 9:30 – 10:50am

(also GNDR_ST 382-0-20)

The aim of this seminar is to introduce students to the history and historiography of race and gender during the Holocaust. As in many historical contexts, race and gender interacted dynamically and created the particular context of Nazi-occupied Europe, which was a place where Jewish men and women suffered in particular ways, German men and women participated in particular ways, and other racial groups – men and women alike – were targeted, collaborated, resisted and rescued. We will read a variety of texts that explore the influences that shaped the behavior and response of an array of people during the Holocaust. Racism sat directly in the center of the Nazi world view. Once the Nazis got into power, they sought to translate ideology into policy. Still, their racial policies evolved over time, spurred by opportunism, innovation, and war. And too, Jewish men and women responded in ways similar and divergent to the Nazi onslaught. Sexism was also seemingly an important aspect of the Nazi perspective. While they indeed embraced an anti-feminist stance, the Nazis nevertheless sought to incorporate “German” women into the national community and women participated actively in the implementation of Nazi racism.

HISTORY 392/395-0-20: Arabs in Israel

E. Rekhess, MW 3:30 – 4:50pm

The 1948 war created a unique situation: a Palestinian-Arab minority amidst the Jewish state of Israel. Thus, Israel was established as a Jewish state but not exclusively so. The Palestinian Arabs who became Israeli citizens remained nationally and religiously bound to the outside Arab world. This necessarily resulted in a sharp crisis of loyalties, the Arab community being torn between its Israeli citizenship and its Arab national identity. Today the Arab minority constitutes nearly 20 percent of Israel's population. It has undergone intensive processes of change, generally referred to as: Israelization, Palestinization and Islamization. The seminar will focus on minority-majority relations in Israel, with special emphasis on three areas: first, the effect of modernization on the more traditional Arab society; second, the dilemma of national identity (the interrelation between the Israeli, Arab, Palestinian and Muslim/Christian components, the impact of the PLO and Hamas), political participation (Knesset) and the struggle of the Arab minority for equality, and third, the developments following the Oslo Accords, the establishment of the Palestinian Authority and the Intifada (the October 2000 Uprising; the discourse over the "Jewish and Democratic" nature of Israel; the search for alternative models - "State of its Citizens," separatism, autonomy).

HISTORY 492-0-20: Grad Seminar: Documents and Narratives: Jews and Modernity

Y. Petrovsky-Shtern, T 5:00 – 8:00pm

This is a part of the two-quarter course designed for the Jewish Studies cluster graduate students and graduate students in the Humanities, particularly in History, Philosophy, and Religious Studies, to introduce them to the field of Jewish studies, methods, historical narratives and a plethora of primary sources (in translation). Using chronicles, legal texts, literary works, mystical and liturgical writings, epistles, autobiographies, and scientific and philosophical treatises, as well as material, visual, and artistic texts, this course focuses on Jews in urban centers in Europe and the Ottoman Empire between the 1450s and the 1780s. The course trains students to identify, explore, question, compare, and integrate primary sources of different genres within a broader picture of Jewish political, social, economic, religious, and cultural endeavors. Students will explore and analyze some of the major scholarly debates of contemporary Jewish historical writing, including the relationships between Jews and mercantile elites in early modern Europe; the rise of print and its role in intellectual exchange; clerical, political, and popular anti-Judaism; Jews' economic and political roles in Christian and Islamic territories; the relationship of Jewish history and Jewish memory; and the role of millenarianism and messianic religious movements in shaping the shared cultural spaces of Jews and Christians.

JEWISH STUDIES (JWSH_ST)

JWSH_ST 101: First Year Seminar – A Rabbi and a Priest walk into a bar to talk about God

C. Sufrin, MW 11:00 – 12:20pm

As the course title suggests, when Jews and Christians get together we expect them to be joking around about practices like wearing prayer shawls, not eating pork, or abstaining from sex. But what happens when Jews and Christians try to talk together in a serious way about the Bible? Or what happens when we die? Or even about the nature of God? In this class, we will consider whether it is possible for people from different faith traditions to learn from one another in a way that is constructive and meaningful while still respecting the differences between them. We will begin with a historical example of an interfaith dialogue gone awry and then turn to examples of contemporary religious thinkers trying to understand the purpose and possibility of interfaith dialogue. While our focus will be on Jews and Christians, our texts will include some Muslim writers as well.

In short: this course is a chance to think about how to talk about our highest values and commitments with those who don't share them.

JWSH_ST 266: Introduction to Yiddish Culture: Literary Images of the Shtetl

M. Moseley, TTH 3:30 – 4:50pm

(also COMP_LIT 279-0-21/German 266)

In collective memory the shtetl (small Jewish town) has become enshrined as the symbolic space par excellence of close-knit, Jewish community in Eastern Europe; it is against the backdrop of this idealized shtetl that the international blockbuster *Fiddler on the Roof* is enacted. The shtetl is the central locus and focus of Modern Yiddish Literature; *Fiddler on the Roof* itself was based on a Sholem Aleichem story. In this seminar we shall explore the spectrum of representations of the shtetl in Yiddish literature from the nineteenth century to the post-Holocaust period. We shall also focus on artistic and photographic depictions of the shtetl: Chagall and Roman Vishniac in particular. The course will include a screening of *Fiddler on the Roof* followed by a discussion of this film based upon a comparison with the text upon which it is based, *Tevye the Milkman*.

JWSH_ST 279: Modern Jewish Literature in Translation

M. Gealy, MWF 11:00 – 11:50am

(also COMP_LIT 279-0-20)

This class will read and discuss selected works of modern Jewish literature in the context of their historical background. We will focus on certain themes and stories in the Bible and in Jewish folklore as well as on particular events and movements in European, American, and Israeli history as a way of better understanding this literature. Though most of this literature dates from the later nineteenth and twentieth centuries up until the present, a study of eighteenth and nineteenth century intellectual and religious currents such as the Enlightenment, Jewish Mysticism, Zionism, and Socialism will help us to understand the literature in its changing historical and social context. Thus while some writers saw modern Jewish literature as a means of educating the masses to modern secular needs, others saw it as a means of reshaping older forms and religious values, while still others saw it as a means of reflecting timeless humanistic concerns. Among the writers we will read are Sholom Aleichem, I. B. Singer, Anzia Yeziarska, Primo Levi, Ida Fink, Ava Schieber, Philip Roth, Amos Oz and Shani Boianjiu.

JWSH_ST 396: Comics and Actors: American Jews on Stage

G. Overbeke, TTH 11:00 – 12:20pm

(also THEATER 244)

Although they make up a small percentage of the population, American Jews have exerted an outsized influence on the entertainment and cultural media in this country. This class will follow key Jewish American writers and performers such as Fanny Brice, Arthur Miller, Woody Allen, Tony Kushner, Sarah Silverman and more. We will examine both primary sources (films, autobiographical excerpts, radio programs, standup routines, play-scripts, etc.) and scholarly analysis. The goal of this course is to develop critical thinking and persuasive writing addressing questions of assimilation, representation, stereotypes, and how what we see in the media impacts what we believe about people in our everyday lives.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES (RELIGION)

RELIGION 339-20: Religion and Politics in Israel

J. Ringel, MW 9:30 – 10:50am

(also POLI_SCI 390-0-20)

This course discusses the relationship between religion and politics in Israel. We will explore the theoretical/ideological background and historical development of that relationship; the advantages and disadvantages of that system; the various religious groups and parties represented in the political system; and how that relationship affects government policies regarding both domestic issues and foreign policy, including a section on religious violence and peace-making. We will likewise delve into broader questions as to the applicability of the Israeli model to other part of the world, to what extent the Israeli model represents broader trends in the Middle East specifically and in the world at large, and the complex nature of the relationship between democracy and religion (or between religion and politics in a democracy). This course will utilize academic literature from a variety of fields, including anthropology, political science, religion, and history, and employs literature from interdisciplinary fields, including Jewish Studies, Islamic Studies, and Middle Eastern and North African studies.

RELIGION 339-21: Jews and the Transgender Moment

B. Wimpfheimer, MW 11:00 – 12:20pm

(also GNDR_ST 390)

The past few years have come to be labeled a “transgender moment” because of the increasing visibility of transgendered individuals in law, the media and popular culture. This course is a theoretical rumination on the intersection of Jewishness and gender fluidity in terms of personal identity, cultural politics and institutional normativity. Both Jewishness and gender identity are cultural constructions with strong relationships to biological “facts.” They share the experience of internal cohesion through external labeling and persecution. Modernity has transformed both gender identity and Jewish identity into somewhat autonomous self-characterizations even as the choice to transform one’s identity comes with significant social judgment and cost. The twice weekly seminars in this course will discuss a series of theoretical texts that will allow us to reflect on Jewishness, gender and the intersection of the two. There is no expectation of prior knowledge of Judaism, Jewish history or gender theory.

RELIGION 374-20: God after the Holocaust

C. Sufrin, TTH 2:00 – 3:20pm

Throughout the history of the Jewish religion, times of crisis and collective suffering have given rise to theological innovation and creative shifts in religious expression as Jews sought to understand their tradition in light of their experiences. In the wake of the Holocaust, Jews and others faced a similar need for religious rethinking. In theological terms, they asked: where was God and should we expect God to act in human history? What does this event indicate about God's existence? In human terms, they asked: how do we live as Jews today? How do we live as human beings? Given that the Holocaust occurred in modern Europe and within the context of the Second World War, not only Jews but Christians and others asked many of these same questions and also struggled to articulate answers. Focusing on theological and literary texts, in this course we will explore how Jews and others have reshaped their thinking about God and religion in response to the Holocaust and the experience of suffering in the modern world.

POLITICAL SCIENCE (POLI_SCI)

POLI_SCI 390-0-20: Religion and Politics in Israel

J. Ringel, MW 9:30 – 10:50

(See RELIGION 339-20 for description)

THEATER

THEA 244: Comics and Actors: American Jews on Stage

G. Overbeke, TTH 11:00 – 12:20pm

(See JWSH_ST 396 for description)