Jewish Studies Spring 2018 Course Descriptions

AMERICAN STUDIES (AMER_ST)

AMER_ST 310: Storytelling in American Jewish Literature
M. Gealy, MWF 11:00 – 11:50
(See JWSH_ST 379 for description)

CIVIL AND ENVIRONMENTAL ENGINEERING (CIV_ENV)

CIV_ENV 395-0-25: Water in Israel and the Middle East
E. Rekhess and A. Packman, TH 2:00 – 4:50
(See JWSH_ST 390 for description)

COMMUNICATION STUDIES (COMM_ST)

COMM_ST 395-0-24: Topics in Jewish Studies: Media & Nationality: Israel as a case study
E. Daskal, TTH 11:00 – 12:20
(see JWSH_ST 280-7 for description)

GERMAN

GERMAN 234-2-20: Jews and Germans: An Intercultural History II
P. Fenves, MW 11:00 – 11:50

The last decades of the nineteenth century were a particularly significant and creative epoch in the long history of German Jewry. It was also, as a few recognized at the time, the end of this history. In this course, we will examine a series of German-Jewish writers, thinkers, and scientists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, each of whom, in his or her own way, created transformative projects, programs, and perspectives from which the modern world can be seen. Throughout the class we will consider the extent to which the specific experience of German Jewry, with its extraordinary cultural as well as scientific advancement and its abysmal political impotence, played an important part in the creation of global modernity.

The course is divided into four sections: with particular attention to the great poet Else Lasker-Schüller, the first section examines writers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries who are seeking innovative forms of writing and action. The second section concerns the re-assertion of Jewish messianism in the thought of Hermann Cohen, Martin Buber, and Franz Rosenzweig; the third section concentrates on a radical transformation of literary and critical modes of reflection in the writings of Franz Kafka and Walter Benjamin; finally, the class turns its attention to two revolutionary scientists, Sigmund Freud and Albert Einstein, who changed the way the modern world conceives of mind and matter alike. Each section of the class includes a short paper assignment; there is no final exam. All readings and discussion are in English.
HEBREW

HEBREW 111-3: 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 on the texts and on audio files expand and reinforce the new material. Independent lab work is part of the coursework.

HEBREW 121-3: 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 216-3: Hebrew III: Topics in Hebrew Literature
H. Seltzer, TTH 9:30-10:50am

This is an advanced level course in Hebrew. Literary works ranging from the 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 203-3: Jewish History 1789 - 1948
Y. Petrovsky-Shtern, MW 11:00 – 12:20pm

Modernity has dramatically changed the profile of western civilization and had a major impact on European Jewry. The course will take students from the French Revolution through the establishment of the State of Israel. It will highlight the plurality of models of Jewish integration and acculturation, the formation of new Jewish identities, the split of the traditional community under the impact of Haskalah (Jewish Enlightenment), the rise of Liberal and Orthodox trends within Judaism, and the spread of Jewish political movements such as socialism and nationalism. Based on a plethora of English-language documents, the course will introduce students to those problems of interaction between the general society and the Jewish minority that pointed toward the twentieth century transformation of modernity. In sum, the course will explore the fascinating response of Jews to modernity on political, societal, theological, and cultural levels.
HISTORY 347: Christians and Jews  
D. Shyovitz, TTH 11:00 – 12:20

In the pre-modern period, Christians routinely subjected Jews to religiously inspired violence, expulsions, and persecution, and adamantly believed that unconverted Jews would be doomed to eternal Hellfire. Jews, for their part, composed a host of polemical works that lambasted Christians for their purported idolatry, stupidity, and savagery. Yet today, Jews and Christians are commonly believed to be joint participants in an idyllic “Judeo-Christian tradition.” This course will attempt to grapple with the disparity between these overarching views by exploring the varying, nuanced ways in which Jews and Christians have related to and perceived of one another, from the Biblical period to the present. We will examine textual, artistic and cinematic sources and investigate some of the theological, social and cultural dynamics that have shaped Jewish-Christian relations over a wide geographical and chronological expanse.

HISTORY 392/395: Holocaust Perpetrator and Denial Trials  
B. Frommer, TTH 3:30 – 4:50pm

After the Second World War, the victorious Allied powers and the liberated peoples of Europe engaged in an unprecedented attempt to bring Nazi war criminals and domestic collaborators to justice. Courts throughout the continent tried and punished hundreds of thousands for having worked with and for Germany and the Axis powers. By and large, however, those trials concentrated on crimes of political collaboration and paid little attention to what is now accepted as the Nazis’ greatest crime: the genocide of European Jewry. Although courts did punish some architects of the so-called Final Solution, thousands of Europeans who had organized, perpetrated or otherwise contributed to the Holocaust escaped with minimal penalties or no punishment at all. Over the subsequent decades individuals, organizations, and states have sought to redress the failure to seek out and punish those perpetrators at war’s end. Lawyers have prosecuted and defended accused war criminals before courts. Historians have documented the development and execution of genocide, while others have sought to deny the very murders themselves. Through the examination of a series of trials, this course will discuss both the struggle to bring perpetrators to justice and the efforts to obscure the crimes that were committed. We will consider the prosecution of war crimes and genocide in the context of the development of international law and historical knowledge over the decades from the Second World War to the present day.

HISTORY 393: The “Blood Libel”  
D. Shyovitz, TTH 3:30 – 4:50pm

In Late Antiquity, Jews and early Christians were accused of murdering and eating young children during their initiation rites. In the Middle Ages, whole Jewish communities were routinely massacred in response to accusations of ritual murder and cannibalism. In the modern period, similar accusations have been leveled, with catastrophic results, throughout Europe, the Middle East, and even the United States. Why did belief in religiously inspired ritualized cannibalism, murder, and torture gain and maintain so much traction over such a wide expanse of time? How did accusations against Jews relate to similar charges against heretics, witches, satanic cults, and other marginal groups? This course will trace the origins, diffusion, and surprising persistence of the “blood libel,” and will survey historians’ attempts to make sense of this phenomenon. We will analyze a wide array of ancient, medieval, and modern sources (all in English translation), and discuss the continued impact of the blood libel motif on contemporary political and theological discourse.
HISTORY 395-0-22: Ottoman Jews in the Age of Nationalism
I.Yosmaoglu, TTH 2:00 – 3:20

This research seminar is about the Jewish communities of the Ottoman Empire and its successor states spanning a period from the 16th to the 21st century.

JEWISH STUDIES (JWSH_ST)

JWSH_ST 280-5: Topics in Jewish Studies: The Settlement Movement and the National Religious Camp in Israel
J. Ringel, TTH 12:30 – 1:50
(also RELIGION 339-20)

This class discusses the Israeli “Settlement Movement” in the West Bank and its relationship to the “National Religious” (or “Religious Zionist”) Camp in Israel. The Settlement Movement was and is a movement to settle Israeli Jews in territories captured by Israel during the 1967 Six-Day War - territories that, by and large, made up the “ancient homeland” of the Jewish people in Biblical and Classical times but that are today populated mostly by Palestinian Arabs. While the issue of settlements in the West Bank often make headlines, its political, ideological, economic and social underpinnings are poorly understood. We will explore these underpinnings and how they relate to Religious Zionism, a religious form of Jewish nationalism whose political representatives, known as the "National Religious Camp," by and large present themselves as the leadership of the settlement movement. In actual fact, the national religious camp and the settlement movement are not homogeneous, and there are many internal tensions both within and between these movements. The course will therefore delve into the array of religious and political life within actual settlements, and will elucidate secular-religious tensions, intra-religious tensions, religious violence against Palestinians and non-religious Jews as well as religious settlement involvement in peacemaking. This course will focus on how both the settlement and religious Zionist movements shaped and have been shaped by both domestic and foreign Israeli policies – to the extent that it is not always clear where “domestic” policies end and “foreign” policies begin. It will also show how these movements have influenced Palestinian nationalism and discourse, and how these movements relate to global right wing and religious resurgent movements. The course is multi-disciplinary, with selected readings from religion and theology, political science, anthropology, and history.

JWSH_ST 280-7: Topics in Jewish Studies: Media & Nationality: Israel as a case study
E. Daskal, TTH 11:00 – 12:20
(also COMM_ST 395-0-24)

The relation between media and nationality is a complicated one. On one hand, the printing press was essential for the creation of nation states, and the telegraph was used as the means of controlling colonies. On the other hand, technological inventions such as television and the internet have led to audiences’ fragmentation and globalization which have eroded and changed the structure and the meaning of the nation state and national identity. This course will explore the role of the media in constructing and deconstructing the idea of nationality through the socio-political milestones in the evolution of the Israeli mass media with comparisons to the US and Europe.
JWSH_ST 379: Storytelling in American Jewish Literature
M. Gealy, MWF 11:00 – 11:50
(also AMER_ST 310)

The achievement of a select group of American Jewish writers is dependent in large measure on the way in which their writing reveals a Jewish past. Their treatments of Jewish tradition and Jewish history are the particulars which paradoxically often give their best work its most distinctive claim to universality. This course will focus on stories by American Jewish writers such as Anzia Yezerska, I.B. Singer, Grace Paley, Bernard Malamud, Cynthia Ozick, Saul Bellow, Lore Segal, Philip Roth, Rebecca Goldstein, Jonathan Safran Foer, and Woody Allen, who have reshaped the Jewish tradition of storytelling to their own individual talents.

JWSH_ST 390: Water in Israel and the Middle East
E. Rekhess and A. Packman, TH 2:00 – 4:50
(also CIV_ENV 395-0-25)

Water has indelibly shaped the historical and geopolitical landscape of the Fertile Crescent. This seminar will focus on water issues in Israel and the Middle East. Among the topics that will be discussed are: the centrality of water systems in the region from ancient times to present-day, how water scarcity spurs the development of new technologies and innovations in water use, the breakthrough of drip-water irrigation, modern recycling systems, and water management systems. The seminar will also feature a half-day conference with international experts exploring how control of and access to water play into trans-boundary politics and whether recent advances in water technologies in Israel may provide a model for sustainable water development in other water-poor regions of the world.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES (RELIGION)

RELIGION 230: Introduction to Judaism
B. Wimpfheimer, MWF 10:00 – 10:50

This course attempts to answer the questions "What is Judaism?" and "Who is a Jew?" by surveying the broad arc of Jewish history, reviewing the practices and beliefs that have defined and continue to define Judaism as a religion, sampling the vast treasure of Jewish literatures, and analyzing the unique social conditions that have made the cultural experience of Jewishness so significant. The class will employ a historical structure to trace the evolutions of Jewish literature, religion, and culture through the ages.

RELIGION 339-20: Topics in Jewish Studies: The Settlement Movement and the National Religious Camp in Israel
J. Ringel, TTH 12:30 – 1:50
(see JWSH_ST 280-5 for description)
RELIGION 339-21: Art of Rabbinic Narrative  
B. Wimpfheimer, MW 2:00 – 3:20

Rabbinic literature contains a large corpus of stories. In this course we will explore different methods of reading such stories. These range from naïve historiography to sophisticated historiography, from reading these stories as fables with didactic morals to reading them as windows onto a class-stratified and gender-divided rabbinic culture. Our analysis of these methods of reading rabbinic stories will be conducted in conversation with different twentieth century literary theorists.

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION AND SOCIAL POLICY (SESP)

SESP 351: Holocaust Memory, Memorials and Museums  
D.M. Cohen TTH 12:30 – 1:50

What is Holocaust memory? How has Holocaust memory changed over time, and how does the Holocaust continue to affect our understanding of trauma, atrocity, and human rights today? This seminar will address individual memory and collective memory of Holocaust history. We will study Holocaust survivor and witness testimony, the relationship between memory and trauma, and the impact of the Holocaust on survivors’ families and communities. We will explore collective Holocaust memory and the development of mainstream Holocaust narratives. And we will consider why and how particular historical narratives have become marginalized and forgotten. We will explore Jewish, non-Jewish, and national Holocaust memorialization, including rituals of commemoration and the establishment and development of Holocaust memorials, museums, and institutions in Germany, Israel, and the United States, as well as the preservation and deterioration of sites of Holocaust events. Course texts—including films—and written assignments will help us to ask questions about the relationships between individual and collective Holocaust memories. The course will culminate in student-directed final projects.