THE SEMINAR IN JEWISH ARTS

Course Overview:

The Seminar in Jewish Arts is a three-credit special topics course for undergraduates. The purpose of the seminar is to provide the opportunity for students to study a variety of topics in Judaism and the arts from a number of different artistic and scholarly perspectives. The seminar will address topics including, the historical and contemporary Jewish Avant-Garde, Jewish artist’s relationship to the Second Commandment and the struggle to negotiate the Torah's proscription on "graven images". Additionally, the course will consider Jewish Artists in the context of multi-culturalism and the identity and pride movements from the 1960’s onward, as well as issues of mobility and exile. The seminar will track the contributions of Jewish artists and thinkers in the creation of Modernist and Post-Modern culture in the areas of the Fine and Performing Arts and attempt to identify meaningful but heretofore unacknowledged relationships between those individuals and the culture at large.

The Seminar in Jewish Arts will feature a number of visiting artists from the visual, performing and/or literary arts, as well as scholars of the arts (including art historians, critics and theorists). In addition to the seminar’s regular meetings and discussions, there will be performances, film screenings and demonstrations as well as assigned readings and writing.

There will be one major research project due at the end of the semester with regular work in progress presentations throughout the course including a mid-term presentation.

Course Content:

A largely unexplored area in the arts is the impact of Jewish artists and critics/theorists/scholars on the creation of modern and post-modern art practices. From Walter Benjamin to Clement Greenberg, Susan Sontag and others on the theory side to the numerous Jewish artists from Rothko to Frankenthaler, Alan Kaprow and others on the practice side, multi-cultural inclusiveness and the era of poly-vocality overlooked the contributions of Jews (as a group identifiable by numerous qualities and circumstances) in the art world. This course will address the role of Jewish artists and scholars in shaping 20th century art practices and look at how artists might "project Jewishness" in the 21st century through an overview of the role of Jewish art and artists in the
shaping of culture, both in history and today.

**Required text:**
Jewish Art in America
Matthew Baigell, author
Rowman and Littlefield, pub.

**Additional reading:**
(subject to change)

Impossible Images
Contemporary Art After the Holocaust
Ed, Hornstein, Levitt, Silberstein

Complex Identities
Jewish Consciousness and Modern Art
Ed Mathew Biagell and Milly Heyd

Homemade Esthetics
Clement Greenberg

On Photography
Susan Sontag

Words, Script, and Pictures: Semiotics of Visual Language
Meyer Shapiro

Idolizing Pictures
Anthony Julius

The Artless Jew
Kalman Bland

**Plus: additional handouts as necessary.**

**Method of Evaluation:**
The student's grade will be based on the following:
1. Class participation 20%
2. Written assignments 20%
3. Research Project at mid-term 20%
4. Research Project complete 40%

Calendar:

**Week 1 (Jan. 22)**

Lecture/Rosenberg “Jewish Artists, Critics and the Creation of Modern Art in the 20th Century” (overview)

Discuss lending library and student research projects:
Using materials provided by professor, students will identify research topics for semester-long projects. Final project will be a presentation on an artist and their work/contributions in the context of Jewish Art. Students will present ongoing research-in-progress throughout semester.

Discussion topic:
“In your experience, what role does Identity play in Art and or culture?”

**Week 2 (Jan. 29)**

Lecture/Rosenberg “Jewish Artists, Critics and the Creation of Modern Art in the 20th Century” pt. 1

Read:

Is there a Jewish Art?, Harold Rosenberg, 1966

Researchers discuss potential topics

* Discussion groups led by professor:
  based on selected readings
Assign Reading:
Jewish Art in America, Matthew Baigell, intro-chapter 2

---

**Week 3 (Feb. 5th)**

Visiting Artist:
Marion Kahnemann

Please read interview w/the artist
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1KXhD0F1p_4xYAbopgynWwLvRLYiHGdhRG8l1QnP-giw/edit

Also:
http://jewishstudies.wisc.edu/arts/chernobyl/
http://mkahnemann.de/

Write and share: One page proposal for your possible research topic

* Discussion groups led by professor:
based on selected readings

Assign Reading:
Jewish Art in America, Matthew Baigell, chapter 3

---

**Week 4 (Feb. 12th)**

Professor Robert Skloot
The Theater of the Holocaust

see:
http://www.lawrence.com/weblogs/centerstage/2012/nov/28/the-power-of-art-robert-skloot-uses-theca/

* Discussion groups led by professor:
based on selected readings

Assign Reading:
Week 5 (Feb. 19th)

Discuss research proposals, changes?

* Discussion groups led by professor:
  based on selected readings (Baigell ch1-5)

Assign Reading:
Jewish Art in America, Matthew Baigell, through chapter 5

Week 6 (Feb. 26th)

Lecture/Rosenberg “Jewish Artists, Critics and the Creation of Modern Art in the 20th Century”
pt. 2: Democratizing Art, Allan Kaprow and the Happenings.

Poet Allen Ginsburg: “Kaddish” as time allows

* Discussion groups led by professor:
  based on selected readings

Assign Reading:
Jewish Art in America, Matthew Baigell, chapter 6

Week 7 (March 5th)

Jewish Film: Content/Form/Intent
Mini presentations 10 min. each preliminary research
* Discussion groups led by professor:
  based on selected readings Biagell ch 7-8

Assign Reading:
Jewish Art in America, Matthew Baigell, chapter 9-10
Week 8 (March 12th)

Class work time/no class meeting
This time is set aside for you to work on your research projects

Rosenberg/Lecture: Jewish Feminists and contemporary art

* Discussion groups led by professor:
  based on selected readings

Assign Reading:
Jewish Art in America, Matthew Baigell, chapter 8

Week 9 (March 19th) Spring recess/no class

Week 10 (March 26th)

Lecture/Rosenberg: Intentionality and the Performance of Jewish Identity

* Discussion groups led by professor:
  based on selected readings

Assign Reading:
Jewish Art in America, Matthew Baigell, chapter 10
Week 11 (April 2\textsuperscript{nd})

Professor Phillip Hollander
Modern Jewish Literature

* Discussion groups led by professor:
based on selected readings

Assign Reading:
Jewish Art in America, Matthew Baigell, chapter 11

Week 12 (April 9\textsuperscript{th})

Guest Speaker:
Laura Silver, Jewish Culinary Arts, Author
* Discussion groups led by professor:
based on selected readings

Week 13 (April 16\textsuperscript{th})

Lecture/Rosenberg: The Esthetics of Exile in The Book of Exodus
From Harold Rosenberg’s “Is There a Jewish Art” to Alan Kaprow’s “The Real Experiment” and “The Legacy of Jackson Pollock”.

* Discussion groups led by professor:
based on selected readings
Week 14 (April 23rd)
Laurie Silverberg
From American Exile to Remigration: Jewish Composers in East Germany

Week 15 (April 30rd)
Professor Steve Nadler
Jews in Dutch Art

Week 16 (May 7th) LAST CLASS MEETING
Student presentations