

Jewish Studies Graduate Courses

HUMA 6222 - Jewish, Language, and Society

Professor K. Weiser

The study of Jews' relationship to language offers bountiful material for examining general questions about language and its social and political meaning. For centuries, Jewish communities around the world were internally bilingual, employing an unspoken sacred tongue (Hebrew) alongside a distinct Jewish vernacular (e.g. Yiddish, Ladino, Judeo-Arabic) in everyday life. This model began to breakdown by the nineteenth century due to a variety of factors. In the 21st century, Modern Hebrew, a "dead" language "revived" by a nationalist movement, is spoken daily by millions of Jews and non-Jews. Yet, English, a language relatively new to Jews, is the most widely spoken language among them and may be developing its own "Jewish" varieties. Drawing on the disciplines of linguistics, sociology, and history, this course will examine Jews' use of language across time and space and in comparison with that other ethnic/racial, religious, and national groups. Apart from reading theoretical texts, we will listen to speech, examine images, and read sources written in and about Jewish languages in order to approach questions such as these: How does a language become "holy"? How does religion/secularization shape language and its use? How does language help to construct identity and create intercommunal boundaries? What are the political uses of language and its study? What is the afterlife of "dying languages" and how are languages "reborn"?

Winter term, Thursdays at 11:30-2:30 in Ross S156

GS/POLS 6057M - Figures of the Other in Politics

Professor Catherine R. Power

This course will take a closer look at how the boundaries of political community were socially, conceptually, and institutionally constructed during the formative period of European colonial expansion and consolidation of sovereign state power from the 14th-18thC. We will do this by examining 4 archetypal Others whose personhood and citizenship - and especially the assertion of their non-personhood or non-citizenship - served as crucial foils for the construction of modern, secular citizenship and agency: The Jew; The African; The Indigene; The Feminine. Readings will be drawn both from recent theoretical and secondary literature as well as from primary sources (in translation) from 14thC Spain to 18thC Americas. We will pay close attention to the imbrication of these figures with one another and related imagined Others that proliferated in the secularizing imagination of Christian Europe and also how individuals from these Othered communities were themselves agents at times pushing back on, contributing to, or attempting to re-appropriate hegemonic discourses and ideas for their own emancipation.

Winter term, Wednesdays 11:30am - 2:30pm in Ross S803

With advisement, can count towards Jewish Studies

GS/EDUC 5522 3.0 / GS/HUMA 6164 3.0 - Visual & Verbal Portraiture in Nonlinear Life Writing

Professor Laura Wiseman

This seminar examines forms, functions, purposes, influence and effects of visual and verbal self-portraiture in contemporary life writing such as autobiographical narrative, diary, travelogue and poetry. It analyzes portraiture as ways of knowing (epistemology) and ways of showing (methodologies). It studies constructions of a multiplicity of selves, fragmented selves, and concepts of bios, memory, performativity, alterity, and fluidity in non-chronological life writing. The course considers questions of the roles and reliability of visual and verbal images of self—whether photographic, iconic, illustrative or intertextual—and their relationships to texts in terms of complement, supplement, [self]referentiality, [re]presentation, [re]liability, [de]stabilization and enrichment. Seminar participants investigate theoretical discourses in autobiographical writing, life writing, photography, painting, intertextuality and self-portraiture as the foundations for analyses of selected primary literary and visual works of nonlinear life writing.

Winter term, Tuesdays, January 12 -April 6, 2021 5:30-8:30 p.m. Meeting by Zoom