

FAH380H1-F: Modern Jewish Art
Prof. Carol Zemel
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Fall 2016
Wed. 12-2 PM
Jackman Humanities Bldg. 100

Office Hours: **Jackman 218C**
Wed. 2:30-3:30
or appt.

You shall not make for yourself a sculptured image, or any likeness of what is in the heavens above, or on the earth below, or in the waters under the earth.
Exodus 20:4

Our history is in our retina. Every image returns our face. Death briefly held in check, O face of the world become ours.
Edmond Jabes, *The Book of Shares*, 1989.

This course explores Jewish visual culture from the late 19th century to the present time, with an emphasis on modern and contemporary work. There has always been Jewish art, although it has not always been recognized as such in an art history organized around national or nationalist categories. This course challenges that writing of history and those conventional categories.

The course begins with discussion of the Biblical Second Commandment and its proscription against images. The focus on Jewish culture is emphatically diasporic, as we explore the ways in which Jewish artists express Jewish ideas and experience in a larger social and cultural environment. We consider not only content and style, but also professional training and opportunity, the possibilities of a distinctively Jewish art, and the place of Jewish art in the modernist and post-modernist spheres.

Although the format of the course is listed as lecture, class sessions include collegial participation through conversation, speculation and dialogue. Your success in the course will be shaped by your involvement. As a result, **attendance is absolutely essential**: our numbers are large but we depend on your presence to make each class session work.

And please, **NO ELECTRONIC DEVICES DURING CLASS TIME**.

Readings

There is one required text, available at the UT Bookstore.

Samantha Baskind and Larry Silver, *Jewish Art: A Modern History*,
London, Reaktion Books, 2011.

Other **required readings** are available on line at the Blackboard course website.

Book excerpts or essays in anthologies will be posted to the web-site.
In the case of journal articles, these are available either through J-Stor or Robarts Library e-resources.

All readings, along with other general reference material, will be available (by book title) at Robarts reserve desk. See the Reserve List at the end of this syllabus for titles and resources.

Assignments

You will have four assignments of different lengths and complexity.
You must complete all four to receive a grade in the course.

1. Report: the Artist's Profession (20%)
2. On line assignment (15%)
3. Reading Group participation, presentation, and report. (30%)
4. Final essay (35%)

The assignments are described in detail later in this syllabus.

Attendance and Grading

Full attendance is required for the entirety of the course. More than 1 missed class, without written excuse, will lower your grade by a ½ letter.

Grading follows the scheme outlined in detail in the University of Toronto Undergraduate Calendar.

Familiarize yourself with the University of Toronto's *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters* (<http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm>). It is the rule book for academic behavior at the U of T, and you are expected to know the rules.

Schedule

Sept. 14

Issues and Themes:

Diaspora and the conditions of Creativity

-Baskind & Silver, Introduction, pp. 7-14, Conclusion, pp. 241-244

-Jewish Emancipation B

Sept. 21

Icon & Idol

-Vivian Mann, *Jewish Texts*, Ch. 2. Iconoclasm, pp. 19-36. B

Sept. 28 Enlightenment, Emancipation and Paths to a Profession
-Baskind & Silver, Ch. 2, pp. 52-60
-Kleeblatt, Norman, "Master Narratives/Minority Artists, in *Art Journal* 57 (fall, 1998): 29-35 B

Oct. 5 Martin Buber and a National Jewish Culture
-Baskind & Silver, pp.70-74
-Mann, *Jewish Texts*, pp.143-46. B
-Schmidt, *Art & Artists of the Fifth Zionist Congress*, pp. 24-31 B

READING GROUP, 1

REPORT DUE: The Artist's Profession

Oct. 12 YOM KIPPUR – NO CLASS

Oct. 19 Modern Jews and Modernism, 1. Russia, Poland
-Baskind & Silver, Ch. 3, pp. 75-94
-Mann, *Jewish Texts*, pp. 146-49 B
-Kampf, *Jewish Experience*, pp.14-47 B

READING GROUP, 2

Oct. 26 Modern Jews and Modernism, 2: Paris, US.
-Baskind & Silver, Ch. 3, pp. 95-106.
-Kampf, *Jewish Experience*, pp. 88-99 B

READING GROUP, 3

Nov. 2 Shoah: Representing the Unrepresentable
-Baskind & Silver, Ch. 5, pp. 162-201
-Zemel, "Bidden and Forbidden Sights: Images of the Holocaust , in *Iconotopisms*, 37-56. B

ON-LINE ASSIGNMENT

READING GROUP, 4

Nov.9

Abstraction Icon, and Nostalgia

-Baskind & Silver, pp. 149-154.

-Senie, in *Complex Identities*, 206-222

Kirshenblatt, M. *They Called Me Mayer July*, any chapter

READING GROUP, 5

Paper topics should be selected and confirmed.

Nov. 16

“Too Jewish”

-*Too Jewish: Challenging Traditional Identities*,
browse catalogue plates, pp. 134-53. **Choose one to discuss in class or in your group.**

READING GROUP, 5

Nov. 23

Jewish Art in Canada #1: Glass, Goldchain

-Raphael Goldchain, *I am My Family*, browse

Dec. 5

Jewish Art in Canada #2: Frenkel, Singer, Waxman

-Zemel, “In the Mosaic: Jewish Identities in Canadian Performance and Installation Art, *Canadian Theatre Review* 153 (2013): 13-19.

Dec. 7

Reprise: Planning a Show (Make-up Monday)

FINAL ESSAY DUE

Assignments

You **must** complete **all** assignments to receive a grade for the course. All written assignments must be typed and accompanied by illustrations of works discussed. Use the following **page format**:

- double-space (no more), no spaces between paragraphs
- font size: Times New Roman 12
- turn off right margin justification
- staple pages together; do not submit assignments in binders.

I do not accept on-line attachments of your assignments. You must print these yourself according to the formatting described above.

I cannot respond to last minute emails the day of or before class. Please see me during my office hour if there is anything at all you wish to discuss.

1. The Artist's Profession Report DUE: Oct. 5 (20%)

Select any Jewish artist born after 1850. (see website below) Do not select an Israeli artist.

Based on research, write an short essay on the artist's training and professional development. What were the opportunities or obstacles to entering the profession? How did the artist achieve professional recognition or success. (schooling, exhibitions, sales, critical reviews, etc.) Is the audience for this artist's work mainstream or parochial?

Include an image of ONE work by this artist, and in your opinion, comment briefly on its place in a history of modern Jewish art.

4 pp.

<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/artists.html>
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Jewish_painters

2. On-line Assignment DUE: Nov. 2 (15%)

I will post to the Blackboard class site several works of art that deal with the subject of Shoah: Trauma & Memory (the class topic for Nov. 2). Working in your group, select one work, and **as a group**, post your brief observations or comments to the list. Focus on the design and organization of the work—its formal qualities—and how these convey an idea or meaning. You may need to do some further research to understand the works' context, setting or effect. The assignment is **shared**; **all members receive the same grade**.

3. Small Reading Group: Oct. 19 – Nov. 16 Questions, Discussion (30%)

Report: DUE 1 WEEK AFTER YOU ARE DISCUSSION LEADER

You will be part of a group of 5. The group will meet independently in the first month to select essays that are not included in the required weekly readings; each group member will choose 1 text for all 5 people to read. You may want to concentrate on a particular theme, or read broadly—it's up to the group. Your goal is to have a series of interesting conversations.

Reading group discussions begin in class **February 7**. Up to 35 minutes are set aside for the groups to meet separately. When your selection is the essay-of-the-week, you should prepare 3 or 4 questions to help guide the group's discussion. (We will prepare some questions as practice in the first weeks of class.) You may also summarize key issues on that page. Distribute these in printed form to the group members. Try to ask questions that draw on specific elements in the text and/or its accompanying images, or that suggest different perspectives of different viewers/readers. In your questions or discussion, don't avoid free association or reference—the challenge is to take those thoughts that are stimulated by what you've seen or read and make them relevant to the topic. Why did the topic provoke those examples or ideas?

After class, summarize and evaluate the discussion—what worked, what didn't--and submit this with your questions the following week. This exercise will not work unless everyone does the reading; the group leader will assume that you are prepared.

NOTE: on days when there are Reading Group Discussions, you will be preparing for two sets of reading and discussion: 1 for the general class discussion described in the syllabus, and 1 for your group.

3. Final Essay (35%) DUE: Dec. 7

Select an image (not seen in class) that is an example of Jewish art, broadly defined. **Do not** select a religious object or artifact, or work that falls into the category of Judaica. **This must be work that circulates to audiences that are broader than a local Jewish community.**

Discuss the work in terms of the following three categories:

- the **formal presentation or style**, and how these elements (color, line and brushstroke, overall design and compositional emphases) work to convey content or idea.

- how has the work **circulated** or come to public attention—exhibition history, collectors, etc. This is not a biography of the artist, but rather a “biography” of the work.

- who are the **audiences** for the work? what is its appeal, success, or reputation. I'm looking for your opinion here, but you may want to look at some critical reviews of the work as well.

You may refer to class discussions, texts, and further readings to develop your ideas. Meet with me by **November 9** to confirm and to discuss your selection.
7-10 pages

RESERVE LIST

The following books and essays are available at Robarts Library Reserve Desk, under this course title.

Titles marked * contain required reading.

Other titles may serve as research guides.

*Baigell, Matthew and Milly Heyd., eds. *Complex identities; Jewish Consciousness and Modern Art*. Rutgers University Press, 2001.
N7417.6 C64 2001X

Bland, Kalman P., *The Artless Jew; Medieval and Modern Affirmations and Denials of the Visual*. (2000)
BM 538 A7 B55 2000X & electronic

Bohm-Duchen, Monica, *After Auschwitz: responses to the Holocaust in Contemporary Art* (1995)
N 7417.6 A48 1995

Hornstein, Shelley & Florence Jacobowitz, *Image & Remembrance: Representation and the Holocaust* (2003)
NX 650 H57 146 2003

*Kampf, Avram, *Jewish Experience in the Art of the Twentieth Century* (1984).
N 7417.6 K35 1984

*Kirshenblatt, Mayer & Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *They call Me Mayer July* (2007) DS 135 P62 0595 2007X

*Kleeblatt, Norman, *Too Jewish; Challenging Traditional Identities*. NY, Jewish Museum (1998.)
DS 143 T65 1996X

*Mann, Vivian B., ed., *Jewish Texts on the Visual Arts*. (2000)
N 7415 A74 2000

*NY, Jewish Museum, *Russian Jewish Artists in a Century of Change, 1890-1990*. (1995.)
N6988 R857 1995

Olin, Margaret, *The Nation without Art* (2001)
N 7415 O45 2001X

*Schmidt, Gilya Gerda. *The Art and Artists of the Fifth Zionist Congress, 1901*.
Syracuse University Press, 2003.
N 7417.6 S36 2003X

Silver, Kenneth and Romy Golan. *Circle of Montparnasse. Jewish Artists in Paris, 1905-45*. (1985)
N 6850 S55 1985

*Spolsky, Ellen, ed., *Iconotropism: Turning Toward Pictures*. Bucknell U. Press,
2004. N 7740 I25 2004X

Trepanier, Esther, *Jewish Painters Artists of Montreal*. (2008)
ND 247 .M65 T313 2008

Young, James, *At Memory's Edge; After images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture*. Yale University Press, 2000.
NX 650 H57 Y68 c2000