

# ART 495: MODERN JEWISH ART

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MB 235  
T/TH 10:00-11:15 AM  
3 credit hours

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

“Modern Jewish Art” looks at the proliferation of twentieth-century artists of Jewish heritage who strongly influenced the course of modern art. These artists are many, including Max Liebermann, Marc Chagall, El Lissitzky, Audrey Flack, George Segal, Alfred Stieglitz, Reuven Rubin, Mordecai Ardon, Menashe Kadishman, along with dozens of others. The seminar will explore how, if at all, Jewish identity influenced these artists’ work, the similar and dissimilar styles and themes of the artists, and what this work says the twentieth-century Jewish experience. We will consider, among other issues: why – and why not – “Jewish” artwork is derivative from the cultures and places where the Jewish artist resides; how modern art with Jewish subjects has been excluded from the dominant, often nationalistic, and mostly Christian-centric canon; and how distinctive Jewish subjects and symbols have been incorporated in modern art. Confronted with non-Jewish perspectives beyond the walls of their enclosed shtetls, Jews inevitably experienced complex questions of identity. Indeed, in the twentieth-century Jewish identity began to assume a more secular form, and artists were inevitably influenced by these changes. Modern Jewish artists worked on diverse subjects as they discovered the artistic possibilities of depicting everyday Jewish life (genre art) in addition to religious themes, while some continued to feature images of Jewish customs. The differing settings of Europe, America, and Israel will be examined in turn for their own particular character(s).

Throughout the semester, students will investigate an artist or artistic theme relating Jewish artists and the modern experience, on which they will write an original research paper. By February 3, you will have chosen a significant topic on which to write your paper. Please pick one of the nearly 100 artists in the course textbook, *Jewish Art: A Modern History*, or a theme you may discover from our readings. Indeed, our course readings are a starting point for your research. I will be happy to recommend further sources for you, and as you read class assignments you will find that endnotes and the bibliographies will be very helpful as you begin to refine your paper interests. The extensive bibliography at the end of your textbook will be especially helpful.

A **rough draft** of your paper is due on March 24. I expect this rough draft to be a fully fleshed out argument – essentially almost a “final” draft, clearly written and over 10 pages, that you will rework for the remainder of the term according to my comments. By the end of the semester, undergraduates will produce a 12-15 page paper, and graduate student papers will be 15-20 pages. Papers will be typed in 12-point Times New Roman font and double-spaced. Images with captions (your course readings provide good examples of how this done) will be included with your paper as well as a bibliography (for the draft and final version). All papers will adhere to the documentary-note style format found in the Chicago Manual of Style (for draft and final paper).

Unless requested by me, no assignments during the semester will be submitted as an attachment. Please bring a hard copy of your assignments to class before the class period begins.

Course readings are a key component of the class. Much of class period will be used to discuss the readings, and therefore class participation is essential. Diverse student experiences, perspectives, and ideas constitute a valuable resource that can allow for an interesting and complex discussion. Moreover, while helping you develop your own informed and thoughtful opinions, I hope to encourage you to consider the viewpoints and arguments of others and to consult and evaluate evidence from credible sources.

### COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1) Participation	20% of final course grade
2) Written annotated bibliography	10% of final course grade
3) Outline of paper	10% of final course grade
4) Group presentation	10% of final course grade
5) Rough draft	10% of final course grade
6) Final oral presentation (20 minutes plus questions)	15% of final course grade
7) Final written paper	25% of final course grade

### CLASS PARTICIPATION

In determining your class participation grade, I will consider the following:

1. Attendance--If you don't come you can't participate; please arrive **on time** and stay until class ends.
2. Preparation--You have completed the assigned reading. You have thought about the material and have formulated questions.
3. Participation--You are willing to respond to my questions, to ask questions, to respond to the comments of other students, to express an opinion, to take intellectual risks, to take responsibility for your education. There will also be several in-class assignments that will impact your grade.

**NOTE:** Cell phones **must be turned off** when you enter my classroom. If a cell phone rings during class, you will be asked to lead the next scheduled class discussion.

### ATTENDANCE POLICY

Attendance at class is expected. As you can see under course requirements, class participation is worth 20% of your grade and if you don't attend class then you can't participate. 20% is substantial and therefore absence from class will negatively affect your class participation grade. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of every class meeting. If you have more than two unexcused absences then your final course grade will be lowered one letter grade, for every subsequent absence your grade will continue to drop (for example, three unexcused absences will drop an A to a A-, on the fourth unexcused absence that A- will drop to a B+, etc.).

*Please note: If you have missed a class then it is your responsibility to obtain the information necessary to be up-to-date for the next class. In addition, for all missed classes that are dedicated to discussion, a two-page response paper addressing each of that day's readings will be due at the next class meeting. Failure to bring in such a paper will result in an automatic full grade drop (An A would drop to a B, a B to a C, and so on). If you are absent on a day that we*

*watch a film in class then you are required to see that film within a week and provide me with a two-page reaction paper to it. Failure to do so will result in your grade being lowered one full letter.*

Particularly relevant to absences is our visit to the Maltz Museum on February 24. This visit is the most crucial day of our semester. Not only will we learn how the Jewish experience manifested in America, and especially in Cleveland, through cultural artifacts, but we will also see material culture from the Holocaust and hear from a Holocaust survivor. Indeed, this day at the museum is so important that we will spend 2 hours at the museum and in exchange I will give you two full classes off to make up for the time at the museum and travel. If you miss the Maltz visit then it will count as three absences and your grade will be lowered. Not only will your grade be lowered, in order to pass the class you will need to visit the Maltz Museum on your own time and write an extensive paper, which will include research, about that visit and Holocaust testimony (5-plus pages; details about this paper will be provided if it comes to that).

Another essential field trip in this class is our attendance at Cleveland's citywide Yom Hashoah commemoration on April 15 (see syllabus date for details). This annual commemoration takes place at a local temple on the east side, in Beachwood. Yom Hashoah – Holocaust Remembrance Day – is observed one week after the conclusion of Passover. While the rituals for this holiday are still being created, it is a solemn day that is widely observed wherever Jews live. Hundreds of local Holocaust survivors, their families, and community members will gather to honor the six million Jews who died during the Holocaust. Stories from six Holocaust survivors will be shared as they light memorial candles with the families. There also will be a March of the Generations, with children of all ages from area youth groups and schools carrying candles to signify that Jewish life continues after the Holocaust. Again, like the Maltz visit, you will be getting two days off from in-class readings and discussion to make up for the time you will spend at the commemoration, which is one of the most moving rituals in modern Jewry. Also like the Maltz visit, if you miss the commemoration then it will count as three absences and your grade will be lowered. In addition to your grade being lowered, in order to pass the class you will need to write a paper, which will include research, about Yom Hashoah (5-plus pages; details about this paper will be provided if it comes to that).

### TEXTS

#### **Texts for purchase at the CSU Bookstore:**

Samantha Baskind and Larry Silver, *Jewish Art: A Modern History*. London: Reaktion Books, 2012.

Raymond P. Scheindlin, *A Short History of the Jewish People: From Legendary Times to Modern Statehood*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Art Spiegelman, *Maus I: A Survivor's Tale: My Father Bleeds History* (1986) and *Maus II: And Here My Troubles Began* (1991). The bookstore has copies for purchase but if you already own a copy then any edition is fine.

**COURSE READINGS:**

All of your readings, aside from those books cited above, will be on electronic reserve. It is your responsibility to allow sufficient time to access and read these essays. That the computer system was down the day before class is not a good excuse for being unprepared. I recommend that at the beginning of the term you print out or download all of the readings.

**HONOR CODE**

Students are bound by the Cleveland State University Honor Code. I also want to point out that academic integrity is fundamental to the activities and principles of a university. When in doubt about plagiarism, paraphrasing, quoting, collaboration, or any other form of cheating, consult the course instructor or a manual of style like that of Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 8<sup>th</sup> ed.

## SCHEDULE OF CLASSES AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

- Jan. 13: Introduction to course
- Jan. 15: Who are the Jews and Anti-Semitism  
Sander L. Gilman, "The Jew's Body: Thoughts on Jewish Physical Difference," in Norman L. Kleeblatt, ed., *Too Jewish?: Challenging Traditional Identities* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1996), 60-73.  
Linda Nochlin, "Degas and the Dreyfus Affair: A Portrait of the Artist as an Anti-Semite," in *The Politics of Vision: Essays on Nineteenth-Century Art and Society* (New York: Harper & Row, 1989), 141-169.
- Jan. 20: Class will meet in the library for an introduction to basic skills and resources specific to art history research. Please go to RT 502 instead of the classroom and be there promptly at 10:00 am.
- Jan. 22: A Prequel to Modernity  
*The Jewish People: A Story of Survival*  
Baskind and Silver, "Introduction" and "A Prequel to Modernity," 6-37.
- Jan. 27: Defining Jewish Art  
Joseph Gutmann, "The 'Second Commandment' and the Image in Judaism," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 32 (1961): 161-79.  
Harold Rosenberg, "Is There a Jewish Art?," *Commentary* 42, no. 1 (July 1966): 57-60.  
Annabel Jane Wharton, "JEWISH ART, Jewish art," *Images* 1 (2007): 29-35.
- Jan. 29: Jewish Identity and European Artists  
Larry Silver, "Jewish Identity in Art and Art History: Maurycy Gottlieb as Early Jewish Artist," in Catherine M. Sousloff, ed., *Jewish Identity in Modern Art History*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 87-113.  
Nicholas Mirzoeff, "Pissarro's Passage," in Nicholas Mirzoeff, ed., *Diaspora and Visual Culture: Representing Africans and Jews* (London: Routledge, 2000), 57-75.
- Feb. 3: European Jewish Art  
*Image Before My Eyes*  
Baskind and Silver, "Inventing the Jewish Artist in Europe," 38-74.  
PAPER TOPICS DUE
- Feb. 5: The Reception and Subjects of European Jewish Artists  
Chana Schütz, "Max Liebermann as a Jewish' Painter: The Artist's Reception in His Time," in Emily D. Bilski, ed., *Berlin Metropolis: Jews and the New Culture, 1890-1918* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 146-63.  
Ziva Amishai-Maisels, "The Jewish Jesus," *Journal of Jewish Art* 9 (1982): 84-104.

- Feb. 10: European Jewish Art and Politics  
Haya Friedman, "Lissitzky's *Had Gadya*," *Jewish Art* 12-13 (1986-87): 294-303.  
Baskind and Silver, "Revolutions in Art and Politics," 75-114.
- Feb. 12: The Holocaust: Propaganda, The Final Solution, and Degenerate Art  
Edward Phillips, ed., "Propaganda for War and Mass Murder," in *State of Deception: The Power of Nazi Propaganda* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2009): 100-39, 173-75.  
*Night and Fog*
- Feb. 17: Memorializing the Holocaust  
James E. Young, "Introduction," in *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 1-15, 351-53.  
Alvin H. Rosenfeld, "The Americanization of the Holocaust," *Commentary* (June 1995): 35-40.  
Baskind and Silver, "Art and the Holocaust, Survival and Remembrance," 162-201.  
ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE
- Feb. 19: The Holocaust and Secondary Witnessing  
Art Spiegelman, *Maus*, vols. 1 and 2.  
Marianne Hirsch, "Family Pictures: *Maus*, Mourning, and Post-Memory," *Discourse: Journal for Theoretical Studies in Media and Culture* 15, no. 2 (Winter 1992-93): 3-29.
- Feb. 24: Maltz Museum of Jewish Heritage visit from 10:00-12:00 pm. The cost to get into the museum is \$6 and parking is free. Please consider this cost as one of your "book purchases." I think that you will find the museum visit worthwhile for the nominal fee. We will meet at the Maltz at 10:00 am and you can expect to be there until 12:00 pm, giving you plenty of time to get back to campus for a 12:30 class. As you can see from this syllabus, I have cancelled two classes to make up for the extra time we will be spending at the museum. Not only will we be viewing objects related to Jewish life and the Holocaust, while at the Maltz we will hear from a Holocaust survivor. That we live in Cleveland and have these opportunities is extraordinary, and I think it very important we take advantage of them. The museum is located at 2929 Richmond Road, Beachwood. The museum is 19 miles from campus.  
PAPER OUTLINE DUE
- Feb. 26: Art, America, and Acculturation  
Alfred Werner, "Ghetto Graduates," *The American Art Journal* 5, no. 2 (November 1973): 71-82.  
Samantha Baskind, "Midrash and the Jewish American Experience in Jack Levine's *Planning Solomon's Temple*," *Ars Judaica* 3 (2007): 1-18.  
Baskind and Silver, "Art, America and Acculturation," 115-61.

- Mar. 3: PAPER UPDATES – part of your class participation grade (10-12 minutes each)
- Mar. 5: NO CLASS. Our trip to the Maltz Museum will take up more than one class period, thus we will not have class on this day, substituting our field trip visit for these hours.
- Mar. 10, 12: Spring Break
- Mar. 17: Jewish Art in America: Making the World a Better Place  
Samantha Baskind, “Soyer or Walter Broe,” in *Raphael Soyer and the Search for Modern Jewish Art* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 79-109.  
Gail Levin, “Beyond the Pale: Jewish Identity, Radical Politics and Feminist Art in the United States,” *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 4, no. 2 (July 2005): 205-32.
- Mar. 19: NO CLASS. Our trip to the Maltz Museum will take up more than one class period, thus we will not have class on this day, substituting our field trip visit for these hours.
- Mar. 24: JEWISH HISTORY GROUP PRESENTATION #1: Chapters 1, 2, and 3  
-Israelite Origins and Kingdom  
-Judea and the Origins of the Diaspora  
-Roman Palestine and Sassanid Babylonia  
JEWISH HISTORY GROUP PRESENTATION #2: Chapters 5 and 7  
-The Jews of Medieval Christian Europe  
-The Jews of Western Europe  
ROUGH DRAFT OF PAPER DUE
- Mar. 26: JEWISH HISTORY GROUP PRESENTATION #3: Chapters 8 and 9  
-The Jews of Eastern Europe and the United States  
-The Holocaust  
JEWISH HISTORY GROUP PRESENTATION #4: Chapters 10, 11, and Afterward  
-Zionism and the Origins of the State of Israel  
-The Jewish People after 1948  
-Afterward: The Outlook for the Jews
- Mar. 31: NO CLASS. Our class will attend the citywide Yom Hashoah commemoration in lieu of class at this time (see April 15).
- Apr. 2: Jewish American Artists and Abstraction  
Aaron Rosen, “Finding Rothkowitz: The Jewish Rothko,” *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 12, no. 3 (November 2013): 479-92.  
Matthew Baigell, “Barnett Newman’s Stripe Paintings and Kabbalah: A Jewish Take,” *American Art* 8, no. 2 (Spring 1994): 32-43.

- Apr. 7: NO CLASS. Our class will attend the citywide Yom Hashoah commemoration in lieu of class at this time (see April 15).
- Apr. 9: Israeli Art and Culture  
*Israel: Birth of a Nation*  
 Baskind and Silver, "Home to Israel," 202-39.
- Apr. 14: Yom Hashoah commemoration at Green Road Synagogue, 2437 S. Green Road in Beachwood. Wednesday, 7-8:45 PM. There is no cost to attend.
- Apr. 16: Israeli Art and Culture  
 Milly Heyd, "The Uses of Primitivism: Reuven Rubin in Palestine," in Ezra Mendelsohn and Richard I. Cohen, eds., *Art and Its Uses: The Visual Image and Modern Jewish Society*, (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 43-70.  
 Dalia Manor, "From Rejection to Recognition: Israeli Art and the Holocaust," *Israel Affairs* 4, no. 3-4 (Spring-Summer 1998): 253-77.
- Apr. 21: Student Presentations (3 each day)
- Apr. 23: Student Presentations (3 each day)
- Apr. 28: Student Presentations (3 each day)
- Apr. 30: Student Presentations (3 each day)  
 FINAL PAPER DUE AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS