

**German 8300/History 8960**

**Place and Displacement: Transnational German-Jewish Culture**

**Fall Semester, 2014**

**Tuesdays, 10:10AM-12:05PM HHH20**

**Office hours: Rick McCormick, 2pm - 3pm Tuesdays & Wednesdays (Folwell 320)**

**Leslie Morris, 10am - 12pm Fridays (Folwell 327a)**

**Place and Displacement: Transnational German-Jewish Culture**

Jewish culture has long been characterized by migration and diaspora. The same is true for German-Jewish culture: ever since Jewish emancipation in the second half of the nineteenth century, German-Jewish culture evolved through the experience of migration, intercultural encounters, assimilation, and exclusion. After 1933 this endeavor has been transplanted and fostered outside of Germany. To some extent, in fact, much of what we now consider German-Jewish culture could be considered the product of a transitory moment of fusion or hybridity, something created in the middle of a Jewish migration from Eastern and Central Europe that moved through Germany and then on to other places after 1933. And yet that transitory German-Jewish culture remains more important than has been acknowledged in terms of what Jewish culture is now, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Our project is to analyze such developments with regard to German-Jewish art and culture. How has the intricate, complex relationship between space and identity shaped the works of artists facing the experience of displacement? We are concerned with examples of works of visual arts, films, and literature made by Central European Jews who struggled with the conceptualization of "place," "belonging," "privacy" and "homeland" (*Heimat*) in their effort to redefine a "Jewish" self-perception. Contrary to traditional scholarship on German-Jewish culture, this seminar will go beyond the paradigm of the nation-state, which underscores the fixed place of Germany and Austria and the various places of Jewish emigration and exile. It will highlight instead the complex encounters between Jewish non-Germans in Germany, and German Jews outside of Germany. The recent "transnational turn" in the disciplines of history, literary, and cultural studies has produced new ways of reading cultural phenomena and expanded our notions of nationality, ethnicity, and the interplay between place and migration. We will apply this paradigm to the scholarship of German-Jewish culture and its historical contexts. In underscoring and analyzing the often overlooked transnational essence of German-Jewish culture, we challenge many conventional assumptions about modern Jewish life, in particular the Jewish centers where eastern European traditions predominated, such as the United States or Israel. Our approach also enables new explorations of the impact that German-speaking Jews, in their encounters with Jews and "other Others" in the U.S., England, Eastern Europe, and Israel had on national cultures outside of Germany.

Our seminar is part of an international research collaborative that involves the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the University of Minnesota. The seminar includes graduate students in arts, history, German studies, and Jewish studies from both universities, taught via interactive television. The seminar will expose graduate students at both

universities to new approaches and ideas, and will establish an international network for future collaborative research projects.

### **Instructors:**

- Ofer Ashkenazi, History and the School of Arts, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem
- Leslie Morris, German Scandinavian & Dutch, University of Minnesota
- Rick McCormick, Chair, German, Scandinavian & Dutch, University of Minnesota

### **Course requirements:**

Each week students should come to class having read the required readings for the week and seen the required film, and be prepared to discuss them. (In class we will also show clips from other films, but these you will not watch in advance of the class.) Additional requirements include: weekly discussion postings on the Moodle site; participation in the field trip; participation in one group presentation to the class; a final research paper due at the end of the semester. More information on the requirements can be found below.

**Optional:** participating in the Berlin conference on Dec. 14 with Prof. Ashkenazi and students from the Hebrew University; we do think we will have funding to cover most of your costs for this. More information on this option will be forthcoming over the next few weeks!

**Readings:** W. G. Sebald's *Die Ausgewanderten/The Emigrants* and Benjamin Stein's *Die Leinwand/Canvas* are available to be purchased (in English or German versions) in the bookstore. All other assigned readings will be available on our Moodle site.

**Required films** need to be watched before class. We will set up a time on late Monday afternoons to watch the required film (for weeks when there is one); this common viewing is optional, but we hope we can find a time that works for everyone. If you cannot attend, you will need to make arrangements with Rick to borrow the DVD before the Monday afternoon showing.

### **1) Weekly postings on the required readings**

Each week that there are required readings and/or a film to be watched before class, students should come to class having read the required readings for the week and watched the film, and be prepared to discuss them. Students are required to write and post on the course Moodle site EITHER a brief informal reflection or critique based on the week's readings and/or film OR a response to another student's posting. Please post on the discussion forum on the section of the Moodle site for the week in question. The posting should be between 250 and 500 words and should address the readings and/or the film for the week in question. (Because students in the seminar come from a wide variety of disciplines and backgrounds, you should not assume any common knowledge of literature or film beyond what we read and watch for the class.) These postings provide a means of organizing your thoughts and reflecting on the issues and questions raised by the readings

and the films that you want to discuss further. The aim is to facilitate discussion among all of the students on both campuses. The instructors will draw on the postings in organizing the class discussions.

**Postings on readings** must be up on the Moodle site by the **Sunday** before the class meeting in question, by no later than **9:00 P.M., Minnesota time**.

**Postings on the week's required film**, when there is one, must be up no later than **Monday at 9:00 PM, Minnesota time**.

Postings will be graded on a pass/fail basis and the required postings count for 20% of the course grade.

## **2) Group presentation:**

Each student should sign up by November 4 for the project group that most closely reflects his/her research interests; sign up is on the wiki on the Moodle in the general information section. We might also form additional groups based on student interests not otherwise represented. Each small group will include a mix of disciplines and campuses so as to facilitate exchange across disciplines and between U of MN and Hebrew University students. Students can draw on a range of internet technologies to communicate within the group. These groups will be a good site for sharing thoughts, ideas, and questions about the topics you are working on for your research paper.

In addition, each group will be responsible for a joint 20-minute presentation to the whole class. **Starting in week J-4, there will be a presentation each week, each by one of the 4 project groups.** The presentation should reflect the intersection between the individual projects of the students in the group and the larger themes and questions that the course is addressing. Everyone in the groups must participate in preparing the presentation but not everyone needs to speak; the roles can be divided up in any way that makes sense to the group. The presentation should focus on conveying the group's ideas through an oral presentation supported by any form of media necessary. Please do not simply read a prepared paper. Any links, documents, images etc. needed for the presentation must be posted on the Moodle site so that they will be available on both campuses (U of MN and Hebrew U). The posting should happen by 4:00 P.M. (Minnesota time)/ midnight (Jerusalem time) on Sunday before the presentation is scheduled. Your contributions to the group project will not be evaluated individually, but your performance and contribution to the group work and the presentation will be recorded by using a group evaluation sheet that describes the group's joint work process. The group presentation will represent 10% of each student's final grade.

## **3) Research project proposal:**

Each student should post a research proposal on the Moodle site no later than October 21. This proposal includes a 150-word description of the topic and questions you plan to investigate as well as a preliminary bibliography listing sources you are planning to use and scholarly works you will draw upon.

#### **4) Consultation before and after the proposal submission**

Students are required to consult with at least one of the faculty instructors by Skype or in office hours before the proposal submission. At least one of the faculty instructors will offer feedback on the proposal that you should take into account (and follow up on as needed) as you develop your project.

#### **5) Final research paper:**

The final research paper must be based on original research. The paper must draw connections between the particular research focus and the larger themes and questions raised by the seminar. The organization and focus of the paper should take into account the feedback offered by the instructors on the proposal; students are strongly encouraged to consult with one or more of the instructors as they write their papers.

There will be slightly different paper requirements for students on the two campuses: For U of MN students – the paper should be between 15 and 20 pages (typed, doubled-spaces) and is due on **December 19** by 4:30 PM on the Moodle site; if you are in Minnesota at that point, we would each like to receive a hard copy in our faculty mailboxes in Folwell Hall.

#### **Grade distribution:**

20% weekly Moodle postings on required readings  
 20% class participation including participation in field trip  
 10% group presentation  
 50% final research paper

#### **Topics:**

- Topic 1: Exploration of place as place
- Topic 2: Movement; Places of Displacement
  - How Jewish Identity is constructed by movement from place to place
  - 1933-45 transit camps, DP camps
  - Berlin, Jerusalem, LA, New York, Moscow
- Topic 3: Museums, Archives, Memorial Sites, Public Spaces

#### **Schedule:**

**Weeks 1-8: Meetings of Minnesota section only;**

**Weeks J1-J7: Joint sessions between Hebrew U and UMN sections**

#### **Topic 1: Exploration of place as place**

Week 1. 9/2: Intro to the seminar; discussion: slides from a work by visual artist Judith Tucker (<http://land2.leeds.ac.uk/texts/judith-tucker-resort-ii/>); clip from Ernst Lubitsch, *Der Stolz der Firma* (1914)

## Topic 2: Movement; Places of Displacement

Week 2 9/9:

Emigre cinema

**Required film (to be watched before class):** Michael Curtiz/Mihaly Kertesz, *Casablanca* (1943)—a film in which an emigre director directs a cast of emigres who portray emigres trying to flee Nazi-controlled Europe and N. Africa

**Clips** from *From Hitler to Hollywood* (2 hour PBS documentary by Karen Thomas, 2009--**shown in class**)

**Readings:** short pieces by Katz, Robertson, and McCormick on *Casablanca*;

**Also:** Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory* (introduction)

Week 3. 9/16:

Early Lubitsch: Upward Mobility/Migration/Fantasies of America in Germany

**Required film:** *Die Austerlitzprinzessin* (*The Oyster Princess*, 1919)

**Clips** from *Der Stolz der Firma* (1914), *Schuhpalast Pinkus* (1916)

**Readings:** McCormick, “Transnational Jewish Comedy” (overview of Lubitsch) and “Marrying Up?” (short paper on *Oyster Princess*); Paul Lerner, “Consuming Powers: The ‘Jewish Department Store’ in German Politics and Society”

Week 4. 9/23:

Late Lubitsch: Anti-Nazi comedy & Jewish identity in Hollywood

**Required film:** *To Be or Not To Be* (1942)

**Readings:** Gerd Gemünden, “Space out of Joint” on *To Be or Not to Be*; McCormick, “*To Be or Not To Be... Jewish?*” (short paper on same film)

Week 5. 9/30:

**Readings:** Sebald's *Die Ausgewanderten/The Emigrants*; Todd Presner, *Mobile Modernity: Germans, Jews, Trains* (introduction)

Week 6. 10/7:

**Readings:** Stein's *Die Leinwand/Canvas*; *Jewish Topographies*: introduction and chapter by Julian Voloj

## Topic 3: Museums, Archives, Memorial Sites, Public Spaces

Week 7. 10/14: Museums/Archives etc., pt. 1:

**Required Film:** Yael Hersonski, *A Film Unfinished* (2010)

**Readings:** Barbara Mann: from *Space and Place in Jewish Studies*: “Makom” (11-25); “The City” (116-133); “Eruv” (137-147); Manuel Herz “Eruv Urbanism” in *Jewish Topographies*

Week 8. 10/21: Museums/Archives, etc., pt. 2: field trip to North Minneapolis (TBD)

Required Film: Ra'anan Alexandrowicz, *The Inner Tour* (2001)

## Joint Sessions

Week J1. 10/28

Introductions

Reading: Barbara Honigmann - *Doppeltes Grab*

Also: Look at Weissensee image on Moodle before class

In class: Short clips / video links

## Topic 1: Exploration of place as place

Week J2. 11/4: Urban Space

Readings:

Walter Benjamin, *Berliner Kindheit um 1900*

Joseph Roth, "Taking a Walk," "The Resurrection," *What I saw*

Nils Roemer, *German City, Jewish Memory*, introduction and chapter 7

Ashkenazi, *Weimar Film & Modern Jewish Identity*, section on *Die Straße* (1923)

Required Film: Karl Grune, *Die Straße* (1923)

Clips from: *Menschen am Sonntag* (Ulmer & Siodmak, 1929); *Berlin, Sinfonie einer Grossstadt* (Ruttmann, 1927); and perhaps *Metropolis* (Lang, 1927)

Week J3. 11/11: Idealized Rural Space

Heimatfilme —

Required film: *Der Kaiser von Kalifornien* (Luis Trenker, 1934)

In class: Clips from *Grün ist die Heide* (Deppe, 1951), *Die Geier-Wally* (Dupont, 1921), *Der ewige Wald* (1936), *Heimat* (Froelich, 1938), *Grüne Felder* (Ulmer, 1937), *Meyer aus Berlin* (Lubitsch, 1918), *Die Trapp-Familie in Amerika* (Wolfgang Liebeneiner, 1958)

Heimatliteratur: poems by Heine; Tucholsky's piece on Heimat in his *Deutschland, Deutschland Ueber Alles!*

## Topic 2: Movement; Places of Displacement

Week J4. 11/18:

Readings:

Sebald: *The Emigrants* (selections)

Yoel Hoffmann, *The Shunra and the Schmetterling*

### First group presentation

Week J5. 11/25:

Required Film:

Amos Gitai, *Berlin-Jerusalem* (1989)

Clips from *The Flat* (Arnon Goldfinger, 2011)

Readings:

Poems by Else Lasker-Schüler

Atina Grossmann on “Wiedergutmachung”

**Second group presentation**

Week J6. 12/2:

Required Film: Harun Farocki, *Respite* (2007)

Clips: Yael Hersonski, *A Film Unfinished* (2010)

Readings: Amos Goldberg on Warsaw Ghetto as an urban sphere;

The politics of taking a picture:

Ariella Azoulay, *The Civil Contract of Photography*, 85-135

Irit Rogoff, “Studying Visual Culture,” in *the Visual Culture Reader*, 25-36.

**Third group presentation**

Week J7. 12/9:

Readings:

Attina Grossmann on DPs

Barbara Mann, chapter on *Makom*

Herz: Urban Eruvism (from *Jewish Topographies*)

Required Film: Herbert Fredersdorf & Marek Goldstein, *Lang ist der Weg* (1949)

Clips from *Foreign Affair* (Billy Wilder); *I was Nineteen* (Konrad Wolf, 1968); *Die goldene Pest* (John Brahm, 1954); Clip from *The Inner Tour*

**Fourth group presentation**

**Optional trip to Berlin:**

Dec. 10: leave for Berlin;

Dec. 11-13: DAAD Conference, Berlin;

Dec. 14: Our conference in Berlin: Individual presentations on paper topics