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Jewish Studies 284//Religion/Divinity 3961
Jewish Animals
(Wednesday 4:10-6:00; Div G-27A)

"The animals in totemism cease to be solely or principally creatures which are feared, admired or envied: their perceptible reality permits the embodiment of ideas and relations conceived by speculative thought on the basis of empirical observations. We can understand too, that natural species are chosen not because they are "good to eat" but because they are "good to think."
—Claude Levi-Strauss, *Totemism* (89)

"At first this friend regarded me as a speaking animal, and entertained himself with me, as one is apt to do with a dog or a starling that has been taught to speak a few words. The odd mixture of the animal in my manners, my expressions, and my whole outward behaviour, with the rational in my thoughts, excited his imagination more than the subject of our conversation roused his understanding."
—Solomon Maimon, *An Autobiography* (216)

Homo homini lupus est (man is a wolf to [his fellow] man)
—Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, after Plautus

Lupus est homo homini, non homo, quom quails sit non navit (wherever man does not make known to man who or which he is, he becomes a wolf)
—Jacques Derrida, *The Beast and the Sovereign* (I.61), after Plautus

[T]hese two features are said paradoxically to be proper to man and not to the beast [*la bête*], namely *bêtise* [Stupidity] ...and bestiality, bestial cruelty....
—Jacques Derrida, *The Beast and the Sovereign* (I.98)

Throughout the centuries verbal and visual images of animals (pigs, dogs, vermin, rodents, apes, etc.) have been used to debase and bestialize Jews. What then is going on when Jewish writers employ such animal figures in their narratives and poems? After examining the history of such anti-Jewish representations, this course will analyze the animal tales of, among others, Heinrich Heine, Franz Kafka, Gertrude Kolmar, H. Leivick ("The Wolf"), Bernard Malamud, Felix Salten (*Bambi*), Moacir Scliar (*The Centaur in the Garden*), Curt Siodmak (*The Wolf Man*), and Art Spiegelman.

Requirements:

1. Reading and discussion. **(20 points)**

Reading of assignments, attendance in class, and participation in discussion are required.

2. Papers

a. Journal. Each week a response to at least one of the readings is required. These are neither to be research papers nor “plot” summaries, rather they engage some facet (theme, figure, aporia, problematic, etc.) of and/or pose questions about the readings. Questions you might ask yourself as you are preparing your entry include: What is the relation between human and nonhuman animals in the work? How is the specificity of the species of animal protagonist and/or the ambiguity regarding its species related to what happens in the work? What characteristics of the animal protagonist, whether or not it is not manifestly identified as Jewish, suggest a possible Jewish identification? Does the portrayal of the human and nonhuman animals put in question the so-called Great Divides, such as human/nonhuman and Jew/Non-Jew? What appears to be the author’s attitude toward the animal figures: ironic distance, sympathy, antipathy, ambivalence? These journal entries are to be submitted twice: just prior to Spring break (**1 March—yes on Friday**) and on the last day of classes (**15 April**). **(2 X 25 points = 50 points)**

b. A long (10-15 page), typed analysis of “how Jewish” and “how animal” the “Jewish animals” in a poem, narrative, or other text that was not examined in this course (e.g., Vilém Flusser, *Vampyroteuthis Infernalis*; Yoram Kaniuk, *Adam Resurrected*; Michael Chabon, *The Final Solution*). The analysis is to draw upon both internal evidence and the historical context(s) of the chosen text. Alternatively, the critical reception of one of the “Jewish animals” examined in the course can be analyzed (not summarized). The text is to be selected, with consultation of the instructor, by 18 March. Due on **24 April**. **(30 points)**

3. Extra Credit.

Obviously the required reading for any one topic does not exhaust that topic; if you desire extra credit, you must consult with me no later than 25 March..

4. Blackboard

In order to better facilitate communication among one another and to provide a venue for sharing news items, opinions, queries, and calls for study groups with everyone, as well as syllabi, reserve readings, files, discussions, and chats the course has, a website. To access the class electronically, direct your browser to **Blackboard**/ link on the Divinity portal or the Vanderbilt homepage.

5. The Honor Code and Cooperation among Students.

All written assignments for this course are to be performed under the aegis of the Honor Code as outlined in the *Student Handbook*. Students may, indeed should, discuss with one another the readings addressed by this course, but once the writing begins, whether first draft or final version, each student is responsible for developing

his or her own ideas and must pledge his or her honor neither to have given nor to have received aid.

6. Inclusive Language.

Whether in assignments for this course or in everyday life common decency demands that we use language that respects the identities and differences of all people regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, orientation, ability, etc. Hence, for example, gendered terms like "man" and "he" are not to be employed as if they were generic or universal.

Required texts available @ Barnes and Noble.

S. Freud, *Three Case Histories*

F. Kafka, *The Complete Stories*

H Heine, *Travel Pictures*

F. Salten, *Bambi*

M. Scliar, *Centaur in the Garden*

A. Spiegelman, *MetaMaus*

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7 January. Introduction: Pictures at an Exhibition (on Jewish animal iconography)

14 January. Antisemitism and Jewish Self-Hatred(?)

J. Geller, "Toward a Physiognomic Epidemiology of the Fetishized Jew" (from *The Other Jewish Question*, 1-27 w/ notes); S. Gilman, from *Jewish Self-Hatred* (1-4); T. Herzl, "Mauschel"; selections from W. Rathenau's "Hear, O Israel", O. Weininger's "The Jew Must Free Himself from Jewishness", and T. Lessing, "Jewish Self-Hatred" (in P. Mendes-Flohr/J. Reinharz, *The Jew in the Modern World* 2d ed.), O. Panizza, "The Operated Jew"; E. Hiemer, selections from *The Poodle-Pug-Dachshund-Pinscher*

21 January : The Great Divide. Of Human and Nonhuman Animals

T. Tyler "Surrounded by Informers and Assassins" (from *Ciferae. A Bestiary in Five Fingers*); D. Haraway, "When Species Meet" and "Shared Suffering [on nonmimetic sharing, killing, and caring]" (*When Species Meet*, 3-42, 76-85); S. Freud, *Totem and Taboo* (IV.1-2, 4), Levi-Strauss, "Toward the Intellect" (from *Totemism*)

28 January: Heine Talks to the Animals

H. Heine, "From the Age of Pigtailed"; *Hebrew Melodies* ("Princess Sabbath" and "Disputation"); excerpts from *The Harz Journey*, *The Baths of Lucca*, *The Town of Lucca*, *On Shakespeare* ("Constance" and "Jessica"), and *Memoirs*

Recommended reading: Gans, "A society to Further Jewish Integration," 215-18; Wolf, "On the Concept of a Science of Judaism," 219-20; Hundt-Radowsky, "The Jewish Mirror" 312-13 (from Mendes-Flohr/Reinharz, *The Jew in the Modern World*, 2d Ed.)

4 February: Werewolves/We're wolves?

H. Leivick, "The Wolf"; from *The Mayse-Book*, "The Rabbi Who Was Turned Into a Werewolf"; G. Agamben, "The Ban and the Wolf"; C. Siodmak, *The Wolf Man*

11 February The Animals Talk to Kafka, I

F. Kafka, "Metamorphosis," "Report to an Academy," "Jackals and Arabs," "An Old Manuscript," and "The New Advocate"

18 February: The Animals Talk to Kafka, II

F. Kafka, "Little Fable," "Josephine the Singer," "The Animal in the Synagogue," "A Crossbreed," and either "The Burrow," "Investigations of a Dog," or "A Hunger Artist"

25 February: Freud Talks for the Animals?

S. Freud: "Notes Upon a Case of Obsessional Neurosis" (The Rat Man), including case notes; "From the History of an Infantile Neurosis" (The Wolf Man); *Totem and Taboo* IV.3

1 March: Journal Due

4 March: Break

11 March: A Berlin Jewish Bestiary

G. Kolmar, *Dark Soliloquy* (selections: including, "Troglodyte," "We Jews," "The Heron," "Hyenas," "The Unicorn," "The Animal," "The Day of Great Lament," "The Animals of Nineveh"); W. Benjamin, "The Mummerehlen"; M. Horkheimer and M. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (selections)

18 March: Jewish Migration to the New World

B. Malamud, "Jew Bird"; Spielberg, *An American Tail*

25 March: Hybridity or Miscegenation

B. Malamud, "Talking Horse"; Scliar, *Centaur in the Garden*

1 April: Holocaust (De/Re)Humanization I

P. Levi, "Useless Violence"; E. Levinas, "The Name of a Dog"; I.B. Singer, "The Letter Writer"; T. Des Pres, "Excremental Assault"; J. Weil, *Life with a Star* (chaps. 13-14); U.Z. Greenberg, "To God in Europe"; Vilna Ghetto Partisan calls to arms

8 April: Holocaust (De/Re)Humanization II

Spiegelman, *MetaMaus*

15 April: Sometimes an Animal Story Is Just an Animal Story

F. Salten, *Bambi*; K. Kraus, "Rabbits with Jewish Dialect"

15 April: Journal Due

24 April: Paper Due

The Fine Print: The above schedule, policies, and assignments in this course are subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances: e.g., guest speakers.