



Yeshiva University
THE ZAHAVA AND MOSHAEL STRAUS
CENTER FOR TORAH AND WESTERN THOUGHT

The Jew in the Western Literary Imagination

ENG 2453H

Fall 2022

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Office: Belfer Hall, 5th floor
Hours: By appt on Calendy

Course Meeting Info:
CRN 85069
T/TH, 6:45 – 8:00 pm
Location: Furst Hall, F209

Course Description

From medieval blood libels to *Ulysses's* Leopold Bloom, the figure of the Jew has loomed large in the Western literary imagination. This course will examine how authors through the ages have represented Jewishness in poetry and prose for their predominantly Christian readers. How are Jews positioned in relation to law, commerce, community, morality, sexuality, wisdom, and faith in the fictional worlds they inhabit? What technical or thematic purpose do Jewish characters serve in the construction of text as a whole? Through deep engagement with a variety of texts, we'll consider to what extent these works reflect, reinforce, challenge, and/or change the existing archetypes and assumptions about Jews in their respective historical and cultural moments, and how these characterizations reverberate in the social history of antisemitism (and philosemitism). We'll also briefly consider the literary afterlives of these characters in the hands of Jewish writers, such as Will Eisner's graphic novel *Faygin* and Philip Roth's *Operation Shylock*. Taught under the auspices of both the English department and the Straus Center for Torah and Western Thought, this course will feature occasional guest lectures by affiliated humanities faculty.

Course Materials

- William Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice* (Folger, ISBN 9780743477567)
- George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda* (Oxford, ISBN 0199682860)
- All other required readings and viewings will be shared on Canvas.

Course Requirements

Attendance/Active Participation: 15%
Four Reflective Responses: 20% (5% each)
Research Project/Presentation: 30%
Critical Essay: 35%

Expectations

Attendance and participation count for 15% of your grade in the course as active and collective engagement is essential for a successful learning experience. Understandably, life happens, and should you need to miss a class you are responsible for making up what you miss by obtaining any materials and notes generated in your absence. Up to three unexcused absences are allowed, but after that you must have documentation (i.e., medical emergency), to avoid your participation grade being lowered by one letter grade. In the event of an emergency of some kind, I will do my best to support your continued progress in our class. Of course, attendance and participation are not the same thing. Students are expected to come to class prepared, having read and reflected on the assigned materials, and explicitly draw on that preparation to propel conversations by posing and responding to questions and stimulate a thoughtful, well-reasoned exchange of ideas. Participation will make our sessions more productive and will ensure that you develop a "habit" of thinking and communicating creatively and critically at an educated level. For scheduled remote classes on Zoom, keep your camera on to make our learning environment as rich and engaging as possible (and not be marked absent).

In addition to active participation in the classroom, to enhance our discussions, students will contribute four short **reflective written responses** (between 250 – 300 words) to our ongoing discussion forum over the semester (20%). Prompts will be posted weekly, though students can select which weeks they'd like to participate.

A partnered **research project/presentation** (30%) and **critical essay** (35%) will conclude the semester. More information will be provided in class.

Lastly, we all need to tend carefully to keeping lines of communication open. I will work to challenge you as much as I can without overwhelming you. To support your progress throughout the course, I plan to check in throughout the semester, not only to make sure you're keeping up with the reading and writing but to make sure that you are doing well. And when you're not, to help you find the support you need. Patience— with oneself and with others— is critical for a successful learning experience.

Academic Integrity

All students are expected to uphold the highest levels of academic integrity according to the policy of our university, summarized in the YU academic integrity statement available on the YU website. Academic dishonesty is unacceptable and will not be tolerated at Yeshiva University. Cheating, forgery, dishonest conduct, and plagiarism erode YU's educational, research, and social roles. They devalue the learning experience and its legitimacy not only for the perpetrators but for the entire community. All students are expected to familiarize themselves with YU's [Academic Integrity Statement](#) and abide by it. Since plagiarism is a serious transgression of ethics, any instances of plagiarism will be pursued through the appropriate disciplinary channels and may include receiving a failing grade for the assignment or class. Since this course will require research work and the use of secondary material, you must be aware of your intellectual obligations and take care to document your work diligently. We will discuss academic integrity (and how and why to avoid plagiarism) in class. If you ever have any doubts or questions, please ask.

Academic Support

Academic support is available to you if you are having any difficulties that could include the following but are not limited to these: understanding assignments, navigating research papers, issues with time management of your schedule and your life, or general college adjustment, please make an appointment with daphne.herskowitz@yu.edu.

Special Accommodations

Students with disabilities who are enrolled in this course and who will be requesting documented disability-related accommodations should make an appointment with the Office of Disability Services. Please email akelson@yu.edu or call 646-685-0118 to make an appointment during the first week of classes. Once you have been approved for accommodations, please submit your accommodation letter and discuss any specifics with me to ensure the successful implementation of those accommodations.

Library Support

Get all the support you need with research for your courses. The **Yeshiva University Libraries** (library.yu.edu) offer individualized consultations that will help you locate and cite journal articles, books, and other credible sources for solid papers, presentations, and reports. Skilled information-seekers succeed academically and in the workplace. Prepare for the future by contacting the library at [https://library.yu.edu/ask the library](https://library.yu.edu/ask_the_library) You can [schedule an appointment](#), [email](#) a librarian, or [Live Chat](#) for assistance.

Out of Class Assistance

I am happy to meet with you to discuss your progress in the course and address any individual questions/concerns you might have. You are always welcome to email me to set up an appointment.

Schedule of Classes

This class schedule is a “living” document that will be modified as needs dictate throughout the semester. Readings and due dates will be available on Canvas and any alterations will be posted and announced in class.

Dates	Course Materials
Week 0 Thursday 8/25	Course Introduction <i>Cynewulf's Elene; Le Jeu d'Adam;</i> <i>Thomas of Monmouth's The Life and Miracles of St. William of Norwich</i> (selections)
Week 1 Tuesday 8/30 & Thursday 9/1	<i>Boccaccio's Decameron</i> (selections)
Week 2 Tuesday 9/6 & Thursday 9/8	<i>Chaucer's Canterbury Tales</i> (The Prioress's Tale)

Week 3 Tuesday 9/13 & Thursday 9/15	Jews on Stage in Early Modern England Marlowe's <i>Jew of Malta</i>
Week 4 Tuesday 9/20 & Thursday 9/22	Marlowe's <i>Jew of Malta</i>
<i>Rosh Hashana – No Classes 9/27 & 9/29 (MW schedule)</i>	
Week 5 Thursday 10/6 (Remote)	Shakespeare's <i>Merchant of Venice</i>
<i>Sukkot – No Classes 10/7 – 10/19</i>	
Week 6 Thursday 10/20	<i>Merchant of Venice</i> (continued)
Week 7 Tuesday 10/25 & Thursday 10/27	<i>Merchant of Venice</i> (critical reception and adaptations)
Week 8 Tuesday 11/1 & Thursday 11/3	Jean Racine's <i>Esther</i>
Week 9 Tuesday 11/8 & Thursday 11/10	Dickens's <i>Oliver Twist</i> and <i>Our Mutual Friend</i> (selections) Student Presentations
Week 10 Tuesday 11/15 & Thursday 11/17	<i>Oliver Twist</i> (critical reception and adaptations) Guest lecture with Adam Kirsch
Week 11 Tuesday 11/22 (No Class 11/24)	George Eliot's <i>Daniel Deronda</i> Student Presentations
Week 12 Tuesday 11/29 & Thursday 12/1	<i>Daniel Deronda</i> and early Zionist literature Student Presentations
Week 13 Tuesday 12/6 & 12/8	Joyce's <i>Ulysses</i>
Week 14 Tuesday 12/13 & Thursday 12/15	Joyce's <i>Ulysses</i> (critical reception and adaptations) Guest Lecture with Professor Seamus O'Malley
Week 15 Tuesday 12/20 & Thursday 12/22	Conclusion