

Institute for the Study of Global Antisemitism and Policy: Curriculum Development in Antisemitism Studies

Anti-Jewish and Anti-Black Prejudice: Racism, Identity and Textuality

Chloe Yale Pinto, PhD Candidate in English Literature (Criticism and Culture), Pembroke College, University of Cambridge
cyp23@cam.ac.uk

Summary

This undergraduate course is an introduction to the critical study of Anti-Jewish and Anti-Black racism. Students will be provided with a sustained focus on the origins of classical antisemitic and racist tropes, and by tracing manifestations throughout history, will become able to recognise and interrogate both forms of prejudice in contemporary culture and across a variety of forms including literature, film and digital media. By paying attention to the similarities and differences between each form of prejudice, upon completing this course students will be equipped to confront the complexities of Anti-Jewish and Anti-Black hatred however they come across it. As this course requires confronting stereotypes both extreme and ubiquitous, this actively anti-racist education will require as much un-learning as it does learning. This course is designed to empower students to analytically spot Anti-Jewish and Anti-Black prejudice in all its forms, to question the very structures of their thinking and, ultimately, to fight back against racism inside the classroom and out.

Taking a largely chronological approach, this course is divided into four distinct considerations:

1. Classical: The origins of Anti-Jewish and Anti-Black stereotypes and their representations across time.
2. Context: A focus on specific moments in the history of the Jewish and Black communities in order to consider their impact on types of prejudice.
3. Contemporary: Critically examining the present moment (2020).
4. Celebration: Giving the final word to Jewish and Black voices to explore their identity.

As the sections will directly respond to and build on from one another, attendance for all components is highly encouraged.

This will be open to all, but will be particularly relevant for undergraduates taking: Part I: Practical Criticism and Critical Practice, I: 7A English Literature and its Contexts 1830-1945, I: 7B: English Literature and its Contexts 1870-Present; Part II: Practical Criticism and Critical Practice II, II: 14: American Literature, II: 15: The Ethical Imagination.

CW: These lectures will contain: discussions of racist language and imagery / a study of the history of violence / discussion of the history of sexism and homophobia / discussions of global conflict and war.

Primary Content Questions for Students

- What do these key terms mean? How have their meanings changed across time and context and why is this significant: [Including but by no means limited to]: Jew/Black/White/non-White/person/ of colour/Semite/Israelite/African-American/Sephardi/Ashkenazi/Mizrahi/diaspora/Antisemitism/ Anti-Semitism/ Anti-Jew/ Anti-Black /race/ racism/anti-racism/culture/ ethnicity?

- What are the origins of widely held racist stereotypes and assumptions? How can we recognise prejudiced thinking and images? Where and how does hatred hide in plain sight? What about in silence?
- What is the role of literature and language in the construction of Anti-Jewish and Anti-Black hatred? How can we approach different types of texts critically? Additionally, what is the role of 'The University'?
- What are the crucial moments in the history of the Jewish and African American communities? How has this changed the nature of Anti-Jewish and Anti-Black prejudice? What about the diaspora?
- How can we think about racism in the contemporary moment? What does it mean to be actively anti-racist?
- How can we recenter Jewish and Black authors, theorists and content-creators, and in particular female, queer and non-binary voices? How do we resist thinking monolithically, and instead engage with the complexities and granularities of individual experiences?

Learning Objectives

During this course, students will:

- Recognise Anti-Jewish and Anti-Black racism across a range of texts and media. Students will develop an understanding of how the origins of racist stereotypes have informed and influenced contemporary representations of Anti-Jewish and Anti-Black racism; a context of prejudice across time. Students will be able to chronologically trace racist tropes, and be able to locate texts in their specific historical moment.
- Interrogate non-literary material for its biases, ideological slants and erasures. By paying critical attention to unconventional texts such as song lyrics, memes and social media forums, students will harness the skills to confront not just academic texts but ephemeral and everyday for its racial prejudice.
- Engage with the complexities of Jewish and Black identity and expression by paying attention to both shared histories and crucial differences. Furthermore, the voices of female, queer and non-binary Jewish and Black authors often marginalised at the intersection of antisemitism, racism, misogyny and homophobia will be amplified.
- Examine the role of literature in the construction and circulation of both Anti-Jewish and Anti-Black racism, both in terms of textual materiality and literary theory. Additionally, students will also interrogate the role of 'The University' and consider their own position these ongoing conversations.

Course Structure

1. Classical

This is an introduction to the classic Anti-Jewish and Anti-Black stereotypes, including (but not limited to): Jews and money/the media/disease/Rothschilds and Black people and aggression/criminality/sexuality/'Mammy'. Students will look at how these stereotypes recur

across different texts, and will develop an idea of the 'Classics' of Anti-Jewish and Anti-Black racism. Additionally, the role of textuality (eg: the significance of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* as a literary text) performance (eg: minstrel shows and the Oberammergau play) and language (eg: difference between 'antisemitism/anti-Semitism/Black/African American') will be explored. There will be a discussion of the 'key terms' listed above, and a consideration of how certain terms can be used as racial slurs. What are the racial stereotypes that we encounter in our everyday lives, what are their origins and how to we confront them through knowing their history?

Texts [Extracts]:

Anti-Jewish

The Protocols of the Elders of Zion

Karl Marx, 'On the Jewish Question'

William Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*

Richard Wagner, 'Judaism in Music'

Charles Asher Small, *Global Antisemitism: A Crisis of Modernity*, 2014

Sara Lipton, *Dark Mirror: The Medieval Origins of Anti-Jewish Iconography*, 2015

Kenneth L. Marcus, *The Definition of Anti-Semitism*, 2015.

James Shapiro, *Oberammergau: The Troubling Story of the World's Most Famous Passion Play*, 2007.

Robert S. Wistrich, *Antisemitism: The Longest Hatred*, 1991

Anti-Black

[Primary Texts tbc]

Leonard Cassuto, *The Inhuman Race: The Racial Grotesque in American Literature and Culture*, 1996

Ibram X. Kendi, *Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America*, 2016

S. Plous and T. Williams, 'Racial Stereotypes from the Days of American slavery: A Continuing Legacy,' 1995.

Nicholas Sammond, *Birth of an Industry: Blackface Minstrelsy and the Rise of American Animation*, 2015.

Sabrina Strings, *Fearing the Black Body: The Racial Origins of Fat Phobia*, 2019.

2. Context

This will be a historical overview of major moments from 1900 - 2019 in the Jewish and Black communities, and a consideration of how certain events changed the nature of Anti-Jewish and Anti-Black prejudice, including (but not limited to): the Holocaust; the Israeli/Palestinian conflict/ the civil rights movement. The word 'ghetto' will be the bridge between both communities' unique histories; a shared term with very different histories and contexts. Alliances between the Jewish and Black communities in times of crisis will also be explored (with a particular focus on German-Jewish academics and the HBCUs in America).

Texts [Extracts]:

Beth Tompkins Bates, *Pullman Porters and the Rise of Protest Politics in Black America 1925-1945*, 2003

Mark Dollinger, *Black Power and Jewish Politics: Reinventing the Alliance in the 1960s*, 2018.

Gabrielle Simon Edgcomb, *From Swastika to Jim Crow: Refugee Scholars at Black Colleges*, 1993

Anthony Julius, *Trials of the Diaspora: A History of Anti-Semitism in England*, 2010

Nell Irvin Painter, *Creating Black Americans: African-American History and its Meanings 1619-The Present*, 2006

Natan Sharansky, '3D Test of Anti-Semitism: Demonization, Double Standards and Delegitimation' 2004

3. Contemporary

By intensely focusing on antisemitism and racism in 2020, this will highlight the culminations of the prejudiced thinking explored in the previous two sections. Discussions centre around, but is not limited to: Black Lives Matter, systemic racism in America and the Prison Industrial Complex; Louis Farrakhan and the Nation of Islam; antisemitic coronavirus conspiracy theories; Holocaust jokes and 'trauma porn'; the antisemitic outbursts of public figures including Nick Cannon, Wiley etc, hate speech online and anti-racist instagram activism, BDS and the UK Labour Party. This will predominantly interrogate non-literary material, including song lyrics, memes, television shows and other forms, in order to critically consider the nature of Anti-Jewish and Anti-Black prejudice in popular culture.

Texts [Extracts]:

<https://www.commentarymagazine.com/articles/jason-hill/black-lives-matter-problem/>

James Baldwin, *Negroes are anti-Semitic because they're anti-white*, 1967

<https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/books/98/03/29/specials/baldwin-antsem.html>

<https://isgap.org/post/2020/08/a-dangerous-beat-louis-farrakhan-hip-hop-and-hate/>

<https://isgap.org/post/2020/06/learn-about-how-antisemitism-is-transforming-in-the-coronavirus-age/>

<https://ncri.io/reports/>

Song Lyrics

Nicki Minaj - 'Yasss Bish ft. Soulja Boy'

Jay Z - 'The Story of O.I.'

Netflix: anti-racist shows:

Dear White People - supports the existence of the Elders of Zion on the fictional university campus.

Never Have I Ever - the Jewish character talks incessantly about money, numerous Holocaust jokes are made including a comment made to the Jewish character that 'I wish the Nazis would kill [Ben] and the suggestions of the creation of the 'Juber' app which would have successfully transported Jews into homes with attics during the Holocaust:

<https://www.heyalma.com/never-have-i-ever-is-full-of-nuanced-diversity-except-for-the-jewish-character/>

Memes

Anne Frank: <https://www.jpost.com/opinion/no-your-coronavirus-quarantine-isnt-comparable-to-anne-franks-opinion-624088> /// <https://forward.com/culture/443328/anne-frank-coronavirus-quarantine-fear/>

Trauma Porn:

<https://metro.co.uk/2020/08/26/holocaust-survivor-outraged-teens-pose-victims-tiktok-13182918/>

Coronavirus and Antisemitism: <https://www.adl.org/blog/coronavirus-crisis-elevates-antisemitic-racist-tropes> Main strains: 1. Jews invented coronavirus 2. Jews are the

coronavirus of society 3. We should kill Jews in order to eradicate coronavirus 4. Holocaust denial (general suspicion regarding death figures)

4. Celebration

The final focus will be on Jewish and Black writing on identity. The voices of marginalised authors will be amplified, particularly female, non-binary and queer writers. Considerations will include, but are not limited to:

Paris is Burning: the queer Ball scene in 1980s NYC.

I May Destroy You: Michaela Coel on sexuality, femininity and trauma - discussed with reference to Ntozake Shange's 'For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide / When the Rainbow is Enuf' (1976)

Transparent - Jewish queer identity, intergenerational trauma and the Israeli/Palestinian conflict.