

Course Curriculum

ISGAP-Oxford Summer Institute 2023

by

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Course Title

Representation of Jews in British English Literature: Past and Present

Course Description

The course “Representation of Jews in British English Literature: Past and Present” delves into the multifaceted portrayal of Jewish characters and communities across centuries of British literary tradition. Divided into five units, spanning from the early medieval period to contemporary times, this comprehensive exploration offers students a nuanced understanding of how Jews have been depicted in British literature, examining themes of identity, religion, culture, and societal attitudes. Beginning with the Anglo-Saxon period, students will explore early representations of Jews in Old English literature. Through close reading and critical analysis, students will uncover the ways in which Anglo-Saxon works (including their translations) depicted Jews and Jewish communities, considering the influence of religious and cultural factors on these representations.

Moving through the Middle Ages and into the early modern period, the course will explore the shifting portrayal of Jews in British literature. Students will examine texts such as Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*, Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* and Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, grappling with complex themes of otherness, prejudice, and stereotype. Through discussions students will explore how historical events such as the expulsion of Jews from England in 1290 and the Reformation influenced literary representations of Jews during this time. As the course progresses into the modern era, students will analyse the portrayal of Jews in 19th and 20th-century British literature in the context of changing social and cultural landscapes. Topics of exploration will include assimilation, anti-Semitism, and the emergence of Jewish identity in modern British literature.

In the contemporary period, students will explore the diverse ways in which Jewishness is represented in modern British literature. Through comparative analysis and seminar discussions, students will critically examine the intersections of race, religion, and identity in contemporary literary representations of Jews. The last unit will also steer towards an

introduction of the Holocaust and exploring the role of India during that period through specific examples. This will be done in order to ensure that the Holocaust was not an alien event of a far off land. Throughout the course, students will develop their critical thinking, analytical, and research skills through close reading, seminar discussions, and writing assignments.

Course Outcomes

By exploring the representation of Jews in British English literature across different historical periods, students will gain a deeper understanding of the ways in which literature reflects and shapes cultural attitudes towards marginalized communities. By the end of this course, students will also be able to critically analyse the historical context, manifestations, and impact of anti-Semitism, that eventually fuelled the hatred and culminated into the Holocaust, and demonstrate empathy towards the experiences of affected individuals and communities.

Course Duration: 20 Weeks (60 classes)

Course Breakup- Unit I-III- 4 weeks each

Unit IV- 3 weeks

Unit V- 5 weeks

Course Requirements

End Semester Exams- 75 Marks

Internal Assessment- 25 Marks

Attendance- 5 Marks

Brief Presentations- 10 Marks

Class Test- 10 Marks

Course Audience: University Students.

Course Contents

UNIT I

Anti-Semitism: Definition and Emanation

In the first unit students will delve into the complex phenomenon of Anti-Semitism, its definition, historical roots and the need to study it.

Readings

Bernard, Lazare. *Antisemitism: Its History and Causes*. Nebraska Press, 1995.

Halpern, Ben. "What is Anti-Semitism". *Modern Judaism*. Vol. 1, No. 3, pp. 251-262.

Patterson, David. *Anti-Semitism and its Metaphysical Origins*. Cambridge UP, 2018.

Weber, Eugen. "Jews, Antisemitism and the Origins of the Holocaust". *Historical Reflections/Réflexions Historiques*. Vol. 5, No. 1, pp. 1-17.

UNIT II

The Anglo Saxon and Medieval Period (450-1500)

This unit will explore the manifestations of Anti-Semitism during the Anglo Saxon and Medieval periods, focusing on the socio-cultural, religious and political factors

Readings

- Ambrose, S.O. "Addressing Jewish Alterity in the Literature of Anglo-Saxon England". *Jews in Medieval England*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2017, pp. 23-36.
- Gelber, Mark. "What Is Literary Antisemitism". *Jewish Social Studies*. Vol. 47, No. 1, pp. 1-20.
- Scheil, Andrew. *The Footsteps of Israel: Understanding Jews in Anglo-Saxon England*. University of Michigan Press. 2004.
- Singer, Sholom. "The Expulsion of Jews from England in 1290". *The Jewish Quarterly Review*. Vol. 55, No. 2, pp. 117-136.
- Zacher, Samantha. *Imagining The Jew In Anglo-Saxon Literature & Culture*. University of Toronto Press. 2016.
- Zitter, Emmy. "Anti-Semitism in Chaucer's Prioress's Tale". *The Chaucer Review*. Vol. 25, No. 4, pp. 277-284.

UNIT III

The Renaissance Period (1500-1660)

This unit investigates the depictions of Jews in Renaissance literature, art and drama including stereotypes and negative imagery.

Readings

- Eckardt, Alice. "The Reformation and the Jews". *Shofar*. Vol. 7, No. 4, pp. 23-47.
- Felsentein, Frank. "Jews and Devils: Antisemitic Stereotypes of Late Medieval and Renaissance England". *Literature and Theology*. Vol. 4, No. 1, pp. 15-28.
- Greenblatt, Stephen. "Marlowe, Marx and Anti-Semitism". *Critical Inquiry*. Vol. 5, No. 2, pp. 291-307.
- Smith, Warren. "Shakespeare's Shylock". *Shakespeare Quarterly*. Vol. 15, No. 3. Pp. 193-199.
- Spector, Stephen. "Anti-Semitism and the English Mystery Plays". *Comparative Drama*. Vol. 13, No. 1, pp. 3-16.

UNIT IV

The Neoclassical Period to Edwardian Period (1660-1914)

This unit, while exploring the experiences of Jews in England spanning from the late seventeenth to early twentieth centuries, will also analyze the historical context of the readmission of Jews to England in 1656 under the rule of Oliver Cromwell.

Readings

- Abrahams, Lionel. "Menasseh ben Israel's Mission to Oliver Cromwell". *The Jewish Quarterly Review*. Vol. 14, No. 1, pp. 1-25.
- Fraser, Antonia. "Cromwell, Charles II and the Jews". *European Judaism: A Journal for the New Europe*. Vol. 14, No. 2, pp. 19-24.
- Hunt, Linda. "Amy Levy and the "Jewish Novel": Representing Jewish Life in the Victorian Period". *Studies in the Novel*. Vol. 26. No. 3, pp. 235-253.
- Matar, N.I. "Milton and the Idea of the Restoration of the Jews". *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*. Vol. 27, No. 1, pp. 109-124.
- Patinkin, Don. "Mercantilism and the Readmission of the Jews to England". *Jewish Social Studies*. Vol. 8, No. 3, pp. 161-178.
- Stone, Harry. "Dickens and the Jews". *Victorian Studies*. Vol.2, No. 3, pp. 223-253.

UNIT V

The Georgian Period (1914) to 1950

This unit will deal with the experiences of Jews in England from spanning a time marked by significant social, political and economic upheaval, including the world wars, rise of fascism and the Holocaust.

Readings

- Burza, Mehak. "Shoah Education: At Crossroads between India and the Holocaust". *Teaching The Shoah: Mandate and Momentum*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2023, pp. 108-118.
- Endelman, Todd. "The Great War to the Holocaust". *The Jews of Britain, 1656 to 2000*, University of California Press, 2002, pp. 183-228.
- Louis, Arul. "India hailed for giving refuge to Jews fleeing Nazi genocide". *Business Standard*, 29 January. 2019. Op-ed.
- Roy, Baijayanti. "The Past is Indeed a Different Country: Perception of Holocaust in India". *Holocaust Education Revisited*, pp. 207-219.
- Margalit, Avishai and Gabriel Motzkin. "The Uniqueness of the Holocaust". *Philosophy & Public Affairs*. Vol. 25, No. 1, pp. 65-83.
- Steinberg, Bernard. "Jewish Education in Great Britain during World War II". *Jewish Social Studies*. Vol. 29, No. 1, pp. 27-63.