

**Jewish Art**  
**ART 103**  
**American Jewish University Campus in Israel**  
**Young Judaea Year Course**

**Course Description**

Despite the biblical prohibition (or perhaps because of it) Jews have always produced visual art. Some of this art was completely practical in nature --ritual objects, synagogue decoration and the like; while others created art for art's sake, reflecting on their unique Jewish culture and experience. Jews have found their way into many of the styles and trends in visual art, in some cases leading the way for innovation and reconsideration of art itself in the lives of artists and their public.

This course is a survey of the major trends in Jewish art, from biblical references through to the art of the modern period. It will ask questions such as: What is the Jewish attitude toward visual art? Is there a unique Jewish art form? How have the cultures and history of Jewish communities affected the creation of art? Who are the leading Jewish artists? How has the modern experience, especially the establishment of the state of Israel, affected Jewish art production?

**Course Goals**

1. To provide students with a broad understanding of the place of visual art in Jewish life.
2. To offer students an overview of Jewish art history from biblical to modern times.
3. To develop students' ability to look critically at Jewish texts concerning the use of images and symbols.
4. To look at the profound effect of the modern era on the production and style of Jewish art: be it the mass migration to North America, the Shoah and/or the Zionist experience.
5. To develop skills in understanding the sociological significance of art.

**Course Objectives**

1. Students will be able to read and analyze traditional biblical texts concerning the creation of "graven images".
2. Students will be able to read and analyze biblical texts concerning the origins of ritual art and sacred space construction.
3. Students will be able to understand the uses of Jewish art in within their historical and evaluative contexts.
4. Students will be able to see the development of Jewish art into streams of ritual object and so-called "art for art's sake" from the post-reformation era onwards.
5. Students will be able to see their own artistic interests in the context of Jewish artistic heritage and language.

**Grading**

1. Attendance and participation in course lectures and readings (15%).
2. Midterm examination (30%)
3. Final paper chronicling the life and work of a Jewish artist (55%)

**Topic 1: The "Problem" of Art in Jewish Tradition**

**Classes 1-2**

*Readings:*

Landsberger pp. 3-15

Orlinsky, pp. 3-18

Gordis & Davidowitz, pp. 7-45

**Topic 2: Art in the Bible: The Tabernacle, Temple and Kohanic Garments**

**Class 3**

*Readings:*

Morgenstern, pp. 236-274

Goldhill, pp. 127-145

**Topic 3: Illustrating Sacred Texts: Illumination and Biblical art**

**Class 4**

Roth, pp. 455-497

Landsberger pp. 48-96

**Topic 4: The Architecture of the Synagogue**

**Classes 5-6 (includes field trip)**

*Readings:*

Guttman, pp. 169-217

Richardson, pp. 96-133

Wigoder, pp. 123-156

**Topic 5: Judaica: Objects for Use in the Home and Synagogue**

**Class 7**

*Readings:*

Landsberger pp. 15-42

Roth, pp. 309-351.

*Class 8: The reinvention of Judaica in the modern era, Bezalel and American influences.*

**CLASS 9 Midterm Exam**

**Topic 6: Jewish Painters and Sculptors from Europe**

**Classes 10-11 (includes special focus on Chagall)**

*Readings:*

Epstein, pp. 2-43

Roth, pp. 575-719

Landsberger, pp. 272-341

**Topic 7: Art of the Shoah**

**Class 12**

*Readings:*

Lamberti, pp. 1-34.

Blatter & Milton, pp. 65-88

## **Topic 8 : North American Jewish Art**

### **Class 13**

#### *Readings:*

Baigell, pp. 163-204

## **Topic 9: Crafting a Nation: Zionist Art (Poster & Graphic arts)**

### **Class 14**

#### *Readings:*

Donner, pp. 66-77

Shealtiel, Pp. 160-182

## **Topic 10: Memorial sites in Israel and the Jewish Diaspora**

### **Class 15**

Levinger (I) pp. 715-746

Levinger (II) pp. 40-46

## **Topic 10: Israeli Artists look at Arab-Jewish Relations**

### **Class 16**

Ofrat, pp. 231-267

### **Bibliography**

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