Yotam Hotam, 2005-2006

Yotam Hotam’s fields of interests extend from European Jewish History, Zionist history and thought, to contemporary political thought, political-theology, modern Jewish philosophy, and the philosophy of history.

In his current work he examines a complicated web of intellectual discussions carried on by German and German-Jewish thinkers from the 1950s to the 1970s (Hans Blumenberg, Eric Voegelin, Karl Loewith, Hans Jonas and Gershom Scholem) who have not yet been studied together as a group. The aim of his research is to show the dispute about the ‘legitimacy of the modern age’ in which these intellectuals were engaged, its political-theological character, and the interrelated factors which shaped its form, i.e. the Holocaust, the intellectual dynamics of the late nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century, and Heidegger’s later philosophical work.

In conjunction with his research work on Zionist thought, he has taught both in Israel and the U.S. on the history of the German-Jewish Youth Movement- which proliferated in the first decades of the twentieth century-as a paradigm for a modern European Youth culture.

In his PhD thesis, he examined the relationship between Zionist thought and Life Philosophy (Lebensphilosophie), within the intellectual environment of early twentieth century Germany. The dissertation’s thesis was that Life Philosophy provided Zionist thought with a ‘Theological modern-Gnostic Model’ and the goal of the PhD was divided into two parts: (a) understanding Life Philosophy as modern Gnosticism; and (b) tracing Jewish national interpretation of the modern Gnostic concept, its range of appearances, and evaluating the importance of this understanding to the historical research on Zionist thought.

His Recent Publications


Syllabi Below:
Yotam Hotam, History 500, Fall 2005

The Age of Youth: Youth Culture in late 19th and Early 20th Century Europe
Wednesdays - 3:30-5:30 (5257 Humanities)

Office Hours: W 2:00-3:30 (4265 Humanities, Phone 263-1835, hotam@wisc.edu)

Course Description

One of the intriguing phenomenon representative of Central European Culture in the late 19th and early 20th century, is the emergence of Youth Movements. The young person of the German Youth Movement became the bearer of the 'promethean fire' against the 'old world' and the protagonist of the rebellion against the parents' generation. The appearance of the German Youth Movement can be seen as an example of the way in which modern experience became bound up with the notion of 'being young,' and as well as a symbol of the shift from an 'adult' oriented society to a 'youth' oriented one.

In this course, we will examine the appearance of the German Youth Movement, while comparing it to the parallel appearance of the English Scouts. We will further discuss the idea of 'being young' as a modern strategy and its possible broader implications to our understanding of European culture of that era.

Required Readings

- ------- *Nationalism and Sexuality*, (New York, 1985).
- Scholem, Gershom, *From Berlin to Jerusalem, Memories of my Youth*, (Jerusalem 1988).

Requirements

- Participation (40%)
- Preliminary Drafts of Term Paper (30%)
  - Bibliography (5%) due on October 5
  - Review of Progress (5%) due on October 19
  - Thesis Statement and Outline (10%) due on November 2
  - Preliminary Draft (10%) due on November 23
- Term paper (30%) due on December 21.

Sep. 7. Introductory Meeting

Part I. Social and Cultural Background

Sep. 14. The German Cultural Sphere


Eley, Geoff (ed.), *Society, Culture, and the State in Germany, 1870-1930*, (Ann Arbor, 1996), 1-42.

**Sep. 21. Modernity and the Crisis of Culture**


**Sep 28. Romanticism, Anti-Rationalism, Nietzscheanism, Heresy**


**Part II. Youth Culture**

**Oct. 5 The German Youth Movement**


**Oct. 12 Culture, Sexuality, Secular-Theology**


**Oct. 19 Student Groups as Youth Groups?**


Mosse, *The Crisis*, 190-203.

**Oct 26. Jewish Youth**


Ofer Nur, ‘Hashomer Hatzair’s Aesthetic of Anarchism and the Tragic Vision of the World’ [Manuscript].

**Nov. 2. Comparative Case Study: The English Scouts**


**Part III. Youth as a Strategy**

**Nov. 9 Politization of Youth**

Mosse, *The Crisis*, 237-311

Stachura, Peter D. *Nazi Youth in the Weimar Republic*, (Oxford/Santa Barbara, 1975), 1-70.

**November 16. ‘Being Young’ as a Metaphor**


Scholem, Gershom, *From Berlin to Jerusalem, Memories of my Youth*, (Jerusalem 1988), Ch. 9-10.

**Part IV. Term Paper**
Nov. 30. Preliminary Draft Due

December 7. Class Presentations


RECOMMENDED READINGS

- Mosse, George L., The Culture of Western Europe, (Chicago, 1974).
- Toller Ernst, I was a German: the autobiography of a revolutionary, (New York 1991).
Modernity Faith and Crisis: 20th century German-Jewish Identity and Thought

Wednesdays - 3:30-5:30                (5257 Humanities)

Office Hours: W 2:00-3:30 (4265 Humanities, Phone 263-1835, hotam@wisc.edu)

Course Description

German-Jewish identity, thought, experience and heritage are a subject of ongoing historical attention and debates. In this course we will explore diverse aspects of the German-Jewish modern experience, by reading a wide range of texts written by German-Jewish thinkers. We will focus on questions of identity, nationality, religion and theology, which constituted the modern Jewish experience, and discuss the impact of the Holocaust on post-1945 German-Jewish identity and thought.

Required Readings

- Brenner, Michael, The Renaissance of Jewish Culture in Weimar Germany, Yale 1996.
- Buber Martin, Two Types of Faith, New York 1951.
- Glatzer Nahum N., Franz Rosenzweig, His Life and Thought, New York 1953.
- Loisy Alfred, The Gospel and the Church, New York 1912.
- Löwith Karl, My Life in Germany before and after 1933, Chicago 1994.
- Rabinbach, In the Shadow of Catastrophe, German Intellectuals between Apocalypse and Enlightenment, Berkeley 1997.
- Scholem, Gershom, From Berlin to Jerusalem, Memories of my Youth, Jerusalem 1988.

Requirements

- Participation (40%).
- Preliminary Drafts of Term Paper (30%).
  - Bibliography (5%) due February 15.
  - Review of Progress (5%) due on March 1.
  - Thesis Statement and Outline (10%) due on March 20.
  - Preliminary Draft (10%) due on April 12.
- Term paper (30%) due on May 10.
January 18. Introductory Meeting

Part I. Modern German Culture

January 25. The Crisis of Culture
Ringer, The Decline, 1-13, 253-304.

Part II. German-Jewish Identity and Thought

February 1. “German-Jewish Symbiosis”
Mosse, German-Jews, 1-41.
Traverso, The Jews, 3-42.

February 8. German-Jewish Experience
Mosse, Confronting History, 7-52.
Scholem, From Berlin, Ch. 1-3.
Löwith, My Life, 1-19.

February 15. Crisis and Identity
Mosse, The Crisis, 13-87.
Rabinbach, In the Shadow, 27-65.
Wolin, Children, 21-29.

February 22. Political Alternatives
Scholem, From Berlin, Chapters 8-10.
Scholem, On the Possibility, 27-29.
Stone “German Zionist”

March 1. Theology and Modernity
Harnack, What is Christianity, 152-189, 268-301.
Loisy, The Gospel, 139-179.
Löwith, Meaning, 1-19, 33-59.

March 8. Jewish Perspectives
Leo Baeck, Judaism, 189-292.
Buber, Two Types of Faith, 7-15, 51-90, 162-174.
Glatzer Nahum N., Rosenzweig, IX-XXXIII, 271-275, 340-348

March 22. Review of Thesis Statement and Outline

Part III. Post-1945 Identity and Thought

March 29. Émigrés
Stern Frank, ”The Return”
Hacohen, ”Dilemmas”
Breins, ”Germans”

April 5. Political Thought
Aschheim, Arendt, 1-18, 93-104.
Arendt Hannah, The Origins, 11-116
April 12. Identity
Jonas, Mortality and Morality, 1-40, 131-143.
Scholm, Gershom, On the Possibility, 3-24, 30-39, 93-100, 114-117.

Part IV. Term Paper

April 19. Review of Preliminary Draft
April 26. Class Presentations
May 3. Class Presentations

RECOMMENDED READINGS

- -------- On Revolution, New York 1963
- -------- Eichmann in Jerusalem; a report on the banality of evil, New York 1964
- DinerDan, B beyond the Conceivable: Studies on Germany, Nazism, and the Holocaust, Berkeley 2000.
- Mosse, George L., The Culture of Western Europe, (Chicago, 1974).
- -------- The Culture of Western Europe: The 19th and 20th Century, (Boulder, 1988).
- Scholem, Gershom, Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism, New York 1940.
- Toller Ernst, I was a German: the Autobiography of Ernst Toller, New York 1934.