From Lisbon to Montréal: History and Cultures of the Portuguese-Jewish Diaspora
JWST 349 - Winter 2015

Location: Sherbrooke 688 rm. 355
Time: Tuesday/Thursday 4:05-5:25

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Description
This course explores the phenomenon of global diasporic communities, and related processes of cultural accommodation and the negotiation of identity in early modernity. Because of their unique historical experiences, the Jews of Portugal constitute an illuminating case study to approach these issues. The history of forced conversion, persecution by the Inquisition and return to open practice of Judaism in exile pressages the modern notion of identity as a personal and social construct. The focus on Portuguese Jews raises questions concerning tolerance and exclusion, the boundaries between individual and collective identity, and the dynamics of racial diversity within minority groups.

Themes and Texts: as an organizing principle, the course surveys four main aspects of Portuguese-Jewish culture from the 16th to the 20th centuries: history and memory, ethnicity, language & literature, and religion. Among the texts of study are biographical accounts, primary sources, and studies of individual communities. We will also emphasize major historical trends in Portuguese-Jewish diasporic identity: the impact of the Inquisition and the phenomenon of crypto-Judaism (the so-called "marranos," "conversos" or bnei anusim).

Much of our discussion will center on the Portuguese-Jewish community in Amsterdam, which became the most important in the diaspora, and has received the most scholarly attention. However, we will also read about other communities of the global diaspora: West Africa, Brazil, Suriname, Curaçao, New York, and Montréal.

Texts are available in print and/or electronically. All texts are in English or in English translation from Portuguese. We will also study visual, web and film sources.

Prerequisites
There are no prerequisites for the course. As befits an academic environment, all students are welcome regardless of cultural origin or religious belief.
Grade Distribution & Assignments
Class participation (15%)
Mid-Term exam (25%)
Film report & presentation (15%)
Book report & presentation (20%)
Final exam (25%)

Film Report & Presentation
This semester, we will watch a film dramatization of the historical events around the figure of the playwright António José da Silva, who became known as “The Jew.” He was born in Brazil in 1705 and executed in Portugal by the Inquisition in 1739. The film is available on reserve at McLennan Library.

Please prepare a 3-5 page report and a 5-10 minute oral presentation presentation on the film. Each will count for 50% of your overall grade for the film. The report and presentation are both due January 29.

Report: A report of 3-5 pages on the film The Jew (O Judeu) is due one week following the class discussion. Make sure to give your report a title and to build it around an argument—an idea with which others may agree or disagree. It need not include a bibliography; but if you quote from any texts, be sure to include full bibliographical information in footnotes or endnotes. Note that the film report is not meant to be a movie review. Rather, it should address the ways in which topics discussed in the classroom are represented on the screen. You can focus on a character, a specific event in the film, or the way in which a particular theme is portrayed (among other possibilities).

Presentation: Please prepare a 5-10 minute presentation to share the argument of your report with the class. Tip: like a good paper, a good presentation has at least three parts: introduction, development, conclusion. Presentations are due on the same day as the report.

Book Report & Presentation
For this assignment, you must choose one item from a list of contemporary fiction about Portuguese/Crypto-Jews (see Appendix at the end of the syllabus).

Following the same structure as the film assignment, prepare a written report and an oral presentation on the book of your choice. The book report should have 5-7 pages, with a 5-10 minute presentation. Each will count for 50% of your overall grade for the book. The report and the presentation are both due on the last day of class.
It is recommended that you choose and begin reading a text as soon as possible in order to keep a steady pace during the semester. For further instructions on the report, see the Appendix.

**Langue d'étude - Language of Study**
Conformément à la Charte des droits de l'étudiant de l'Université McGill, chaque étudiant a le droit de soumettre en français ou en anglais tout travail écrit devant être noté (sauf dans le cas des cours dont l'un des objets est la maîtrise d'une langue).

In accord with McGill University's Charter of Students' Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or French any written work that is to be graded.

All texts in the reading schedule are in English translation. The original Portuguese versions and French translations are available for some of the texts. If you would like to read in either Portuguese or French, contact your instructor.

**Academic Integrity Statement**
McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/ for more information).

L'université McGill attache une haute importance à l'honnêteté académique. Il incombe par conséquent à tous les étudiants de comprendre ce que l'on entend par tricherie, plagiat et autres infractions académiques, ainsi que les conséquences que peuvent avoir de telles actions, selon le Code de conduite de l'étudiant et des procédures disciplinaires (pour de plus amples renseignements, veuillez consulter le site www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/).

**Required Texts**

*Print:*


*Electronic:*
Sources and web links in course website. **Marked W below.**
The required print texts are available at the McGill University Bookstore and on reserve at the library.

**Schedule of Readings**

**I - HISTORY AND MEMORY**

**January 6 - Week 1**
Course Introduction/  
Jews in Portugal I: Origins to 1492 (Expulsion from Spain)

**January 8  - Week 1**  
Jews in Portugal II: The Arrival of Spanish Refugees

(Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1965), 197-202 (“Spain, Year 5248,” ff.).

**January 13- Week 2**  
The Portuguese "Expulsion" and Forced Conversion (1496-1497)

W Usque, *Consolation*, 202-204 (“Portugal, Year 5257”).

**January 15 - Week 2**  
Inquisition and Exile

W Usque, *Consolation*, 204-208, 213-215 (“The Slaughter in Portugal, Year 5266” ff.; “Italy, Year 5311” ff.).
BF 125-145, 215-230, 242-250

**January 20 - Week 3**  
Rewriting History as Collective Memory

B 1-24, 76-95
January 22 - Week 3
The Inquisition as "Marrano Factory"


II - ETHNICITY
January 27 - Week 4
*Gente da Nação*: the Birth of a New Jewish Diaspora

B 25-52

http://booksandjournals.brillonline.com.proxy2.library.mcgill.ca/content/books/b9789004258068s008

January 29 - Week 4
Film Discussion: *The Jew.*
*Film report and presentations due.*

February 3 - Week 5
Portuguese, New Christian, Jewish, Sephardi: Negotiating Identities in the *Nação*

B 132-151

February 5 - Week 5
Portuguese Jews Among Christians and Muslims: Intercommunal Boundaries

B 53-75
M 20-51, 83-102

February 10 - Week 6
Globalizing the Portuguese-Jewish Identity

M 52-82
BF 255-263, 335-349
February 12 - Week 6
Race Relations in the Portuguese-Jewish Diaspora: Europe and Africa

M 159-198
BF 439-470

February 17 - Week 7
Race Relations, Continued: the New World


http://booksandjournals.brillonline.com.proxy2.library.mcgill.ca/content/books/b9789004253704s006

February 19 - Week 7
Mid-term Exam

February 24 - Week 8
Crypto-Jewish Identities I: B'nei Anusim in Portugal

Watch before class: The Last Marranos (on reserve at McLennan Library) and read


February 26 - Week 8
Crypto-Jewish Identities II: B'nei anusim in the New World


March 2 - Week 9
Study Break - no class

March 6 - Week 9
Study Break - no class
III - LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE
March 10 - Week 10
The Languages of Portuguese Jews


March 12 - Week 10
Portuguese Jews as Seen by Themselves: Jewish-Portuguese Literary Culture


W Usque, 42-50 (“Pastoral Dialogue on Matters of Sacred Scripture”).


March 17 - Week 11
Literary Images of Portuguese/Crypto Jews


IV - RELIGION

March 19 - Week 11
The Re-Judaization of Portuguese "New Christians"

B 96-131


March 24 - Week 12
Boundaries of Religious Tolerance


McGill University Library e-book link, URL: http://booksandjournals.brillonline.com.proxy2.library.mcgill.ca/content/books/9789004246973


March 26 - Week 12
Critique of Rabbinical Judaism: Ritual and Belief


Uriel da Costa, *Reply to One Semu’el Da Silva*, 307-310 (“Preface”), 340-343 (“Containing the Errors and Evils that Ensue from Believing the Soul to be Immortal”), 385-390 (“The Human Soul Does Not Have a Specific Name to Distinguish it from the Animal Soul”), 415-425.

Both items on McGill University Library e-book link [same file], URL: http://booksandjournals.brillonline.com.proxy2.library.mcgill.ca/content/books/9789004246973


March 31 - Week 13
“Portuguese” Judaism in North America and Montréal


April 2 - Week 13
The Esnoga: Sacred Space in Spanish-Portuguese Synagogues

BF 394-433

W Video and Web Tours:

Bevis Marks Synagogue, London.
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HYnhysCxjgE

Mikve Israel, Curaçao.
http://www.seandesign.net/1-360/12_b.html

Touro Synagogue, Newport, Rhode Island, USA.
http://www.tourosynagogue.org/index.php/history-learning/synagogue-history
http://www.tourosynagogue.org/index.php/photo-galleries/touro-synagogue-gallery

April 7 - Week 14
Field Trip: Shearith Israel Spanish-Portuguese Synagogue, Montréal [tentative]

April 9 - Week 14
Book report and presentations due.

April 14 - Week 15
No class - Friday class schedule

Exam period: April 16-29

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Appendix: Book Report

One of your assignments for this semester is a book report on one of the items from the list below, which contains fictional works and academic studies of individuals. The book report should connect the text explicitly to the topics of class discussion and the assigned texts. It should number approximately between 5 and 7 pages, and contain footnotes and a bibliography of works cited. Any bibliographical format can be used (MLA, Chicago, etc) as long as it is used consistently. The report is due on the last day of class.

While students read at different speeds, it is recommended that you begin working on the report as soon as possible. If McLennan Library does not have the title, you should place an Interlibrary
Loan request as soon as possible, or look for it on internet bookstores such as Amazon or AbeBooks. bookfinder.com is a good “catch-all” resource.

Note: You may be able to review a title not listed here. Please contact your instructor for approval.

**List of Books**

Achy Obejas, *Days of Awe*

Yosef Kaplan, *From Christianity to Judaism: The Story of Isaac Orobio de Castro*

Yosef Yerushalmi, *From Spanish Court to Italian Ghetto. Isaac Cardoso: A Study in Seventeenth-Century Marranism and Jewish Apologetics.*

David Liss, *The Day of Atonement*

David Liss, *The Coffee Trader*

Naomi Ragen, *The Ghost of Hannah Mendes*

Richard Zimler, *The Last Kabbalist of Lisbon*

Paul D. Cohn, *São Tomé: A Novel*

Moacyr Scliar, *The Strange Nation of Rafael Mendes*

Nathan Wachtel, *The Faith of Remembrance: Marrano Labyrinths*