This lecture course offers a broad introduction to Jewish cinema from the earliest silent films to contemporary animated documentary. Viewing a range of European, American, and Israeli films, the course compares representations of Jewishness across diverse national contexts and historical periods. We explore how the cinematic construction of Jewish ethnicity was informed by national developments—such as the foundation of the State of Israel—as well as by transnational aesthetic trends. We also discuss the significance of gender and class for Jewish modernization, as projected on the silver screen. Film screenings include a range of genres: musicals, horror films, Holocaust dramas and documentaries, Zionist epics, and Israeli comedies. We ask how filmmakers manipulate generic conventions for the sake of propaganda or social and political critique.

The course fulfills the Race & Ethnicity and Humanities Requirements.