

## *The Hebrew University of Jerusalem*

### *Syllabus*

### *Between Literature and Philosophy - Walter Benjamin's writing - 32857*

*Last update 20-09-2017*

*HU Credits:* 2

*Degree/Cycle:* 2nd degree (Master)

*Responsible Department:* german, russian & east european studies

*Academic year:* 0

*Semester:* 2nd Semester

*Teaching Languages:* English

*Campus:* Mt. Scopus

*Course/Module Coordinator:* Prof Birgit Erdle

*Coordinator Email:* [birgiterdle@aol.com](mailto:birgiterdle@aol.com)

*Coordinator Office Hours:* Monday, 14.30 – 16.00 and by appointment

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Teaching Staff:

Prof Birgit Erdle

Course/Module description:

Walter Benjamin has by now become an almost iconic thinker. This was not always the case. At the time of his death in 1940 in Portbou, on his flight from national-socialist Germany, his writings were almost unknown. What is it about Benjamin's thinking that makes it so relevant for us today? What does critique or criticism mean for Benjamin? How do concepts such as language, experience, reading, memory, life, figure in his writings? What kind of relationship does his thinking have to established academic disciplines such as literary studies, media studies, or philosophy? This course is an introduction to the questions that arise when reading Benjamin's works and an introduction to its most important themes and figures of thought.

Course/Module aims:

Impart knowledge about how to read Benjamin,  
to open up his writings as a room for reflection  
discuss and understand Benjamin's thinking as being situated between philosophy and literature

Learning outcomes - On successful completion of this module, students should be able to:

Critically analyze Benjamin's texts  
Discuss some of the 'key concepts' of Benjamin's thinking Understand the genesis of his thought in the intellectual and political context of his time Explain the formative effect of Benjamin's 'writing style' on his thought  
Assess the relevance of Benjamin's thinking for a critical reflection on present-day culture and politics

Attendance requirements(%):

80

Teaching arrangement and method of instruction: 2 hours seminar  
student presentations

Course/Module Content:

Reading and discussion of exemplary writings of Walter Benjamin. The course is an

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*introduction to the questions that arise when reading Benjamin's texts and an introduction to the most important themes and figures of thought in his work*

*Required Reading:*

*All primary texts and secondary literature will be provided*

*Additional Reading Material:*

*Course/Module evaluation:*

*End of year written/oral examination 0 %*  
*Presentation 30 %*  
*Participation in Tutorials 0 %*  
*Project work 40 %*  
*Assignments 0 %*  
*Reports 0 %*  
*Research project 0 %*  
*Quizzes 0 %*  
*Other 30 %*  
*Activity in seminar discussion*

*Additional information:*