

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
Centre for Diaspora and Transnational Studies

GUEST SPEAKER SERIES

Thursday, March 5, 2009 (2-4 pm)

Education and Initiation in the Novels of the Yiddish Haskole and Islamic Negritude

Dr Marc Caplan

Romance Languages and Literatures, Johns Hopkins University

Venue: Jackman Humanities Building, 170 St George St, Rm 235

The demands of a belated modernization at the hands of an imperial power generate unexpected parallels between the Yiddish culture of Eastern Europe in the 19th century and the post-colonial culture of Western Africa in the middle of the 20th. The first self-consciously modernizing ideologies of these cultures--haskole (the "Jewish Enlightenment") in Eastern Europe and negritude in Francophone Africa and the Caribbean--therefore engage with analogous problems concerning the role of language, cultural identity, and the relationship of the individual to tradition and the community. By focusing on specific tropes of education and initiation in the novels produced under the influence of these ideologies, both the reciprocal relationship of African and Jewish engagements with modernity, as well as the respective limits of these modernizing ideologies can be established.



Marc Caplan received a PhD in comparative literature from New York University in 2003. Since then he has held appointments at Indiana University, the University of Pennsylvania, and Harvard University, before becoming the first Tandetnik Professor of Yiddish Literature, Language, and Culture at the Johns Hopkins University in 2006. He is currently completing a book-length manuscript comparing 19th century Yiddish and post-colonial African fiction.

Tuesday, March 31, 2009 (2-4 pm)

Insurgent Sex: Black Peril/White Peril and the Rise of Anti-Colonialism in the Gold Coast

Dr Carina Ray

History Department, Fordham University

Venue: Jackman Humanities Building, 170 St George St, Rm 235

While it is widely understood that by the turn of the century colonial regimes frowned upon sexual relations between 'colonized' and 'colonizer', we know little about how colonized peoples viewed these relationships and how their views changed over time.

Drawing on extensive archival research in Ghana and the United Kingdom, Carina Ray will discuss the emergence in early 1920 of a publicly articulated opposition, by Gold Coasters, to interracial relationships between European men and African women in the colony. Viewed as corrupting female virtue and by extension threatening the future of the nation, these relationships were vigorously condemned in the pages of the colony's African-owned newspapers. This unprecedented development can only be explained by moving across the Atlantic to Britain's port cities where West African men and their white wives and partners became the targets of vicious racial violence in the post-WWI era. These deeply intertwined Black Atlantic histories illuminate the profound, if little-known connection between the domain of interracial sexual relations and the rise of anti-colonialism among West Africans during the interwar years.



*Carina Ray is Assistant Professor at the History Department, Fordham University in New York City, where she teaches African and Black Atlantic History. Ray is currently working on her book manuscript, *Policing Sexual Boundaries: The Politics of Race in Colonial Ghana*, which focuses on the creation and contestation of sexual boundaries between Africans and Europeans in the Gold Coast (colonial Ghana). She is also co-editor of the forthcoming volume, *Darfur and the Crisis of Governance in Sudan: A Critical Reader*, and a monthly columnist for *New African* magazine where her column, "Lest We Forget," reflects on various aspects of Africa's past in relationship to its present and future.*