CFP for session "Marking Jews: From Self-Identification to Stigmatization," AJS Conference

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For a panel at the Association of Jewish Studies (AJS) annual conference—18-22 December 2022 in Boston, MA (USA)—I invite proposals on the topic of “Marking Jews: from Self-Identification to Stigmatization.”

The panel’s aim is to explore the symbols, tattoos, badges, emblems, tags, apparel, and other markers employed by Jews, their antagonists, and others as an aspect of Jewish visual culture. Ones to be considered may range from those chosen by Jews asserting their identity to those imposed by oppressors as a means of stigmatization. Also relevant are marks resurrected from the past, the Nazi swastika for example, as redeployed by white supremacists today. Investigations of material from even earlier periods are also welcomed, such as the Judenhut and the perhaps even longer history of the Judenstern. Caricature deserves attention as do potential counter-indicators such as the uses of concealment or plastic surgery (exemplified by nose straightening) to mask or adjust identity. How might certain innocent images serve as covert markers, such as bagels drawn on admission folders to signify a private school’s Jewish applicants? Then there is the flagging, with various types of kashrut icons, of grocery-story products representing a gradient of rabbinic approval. These examples are not prescriptive but rather are offered as invitations for expansive reflection. The field of investigation is undoubtedly far wider than this writer imagines.

Proposals should be no more than 350 words long, include the author’s name and affiliation (if any), and be accompanied by a CV. Please indicate whether or not audiovisual equipment will be required for the paper’s presentation. In preparing the proposal, assume a relatively brief period of time for the actual paper, between 15 and 18 minutes in length. NOTE: Panelists must be members of the AJS to present at the conference.

The deadline for proposals is: Friday, 15 April 2022. Please send them (or inquiries) to: Jeffrey Abt at jeffrey.abt@wayne.edu.

Related date:
March 11, 2022 to April 15, 2022