

# FACULTY-LED SESSIONS

SATURDAY, 3:00PM-4:30PM



**EVAN PARKS**

## THE PROBLEM OF KITSCH

What is kitsch? While we might associate this word with cheap knick-knacks, or garish reproductions of canonical art (like a Van Gogh napkin), several thinkers of the post-World War II period wrote about kitsch with moral urgency, implying that a widespread proliferation of kitsch was linked to authoritarianism and fascism. The Austrian—Jewish thinker Hermann Broch felt that totalitarian regimes thrived with kitsch, a system of art and knowledge that he describes as “closed,” rather than “open,” or “infinite.” We will unpack selections from Broch’s essay, and other sources, and ask: what kind of relationship do we see today, in the age of the internet, between our society’s aesthetic preferences and moral shortcomings? How is kitsch a relevant category for our own lives; what does it mean to pursue ‘non-kitsch,’ as a lifestyle? Is Broch onto something, or is he just an old-world snob?

**Room: Myrtle**



## HEADCOVERINGS, KIPPAH, SCARF OR HEADBAND, STAR OF DAVID, HAMSA—OH MY! AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF WEARABLE JEWISH SYMBOLS

**RABBI VANESSA OCHS**

Where do you see yourself, in past-present-and future when it comes to the available material objects Jews are choosing (or are obliged) to wear as head coverings or as jewelry? We will study diverse testimonies of wearers of such objects. We’ll unpack how the information the objects disclose about the identity of the wearers varies in accuracy. We’ll also evaluate how the material objects do (or fail to do) diverse forms of spiritual work.

**Room: Willow**



## HANNAH KAPNIK ASHAR (RELIGIOUS) COMMITMENTS

The Torah gives an avenue to make our own values into religious obligations. Why might we enshrine our commitments? Where is this kind of autonomy liberating and useful, and where is it limited or dangerous? And how do we set ourselves free of the version of ourselves we thought we wanted to make permanent?

**Room: Vineyard**