

University of Delaware  
Foreign Languages & Literatures

Distinguished Scholars Series

Public Lecture

Hannah Arendt, Charlie Chaplin, and the Hidden Jewish Tradition

by

Liliane Weissberg

In 1944, during WWII, the German-Jewish political philosopher Hannah Arendt published an essay entitled "The Jew as Pariah: The Hidden Tradition." In this essay, Arendt criticizes the Jews for not having developed a political tradition that may have prevented their dire fate. But Arendt also cites a few literary and cultural figures who were exceptions, and who used their positions as social outsiders to take a stand as Jews: Franz Kafka, Heinrich Heine, and Charlie Chaplin. Dr. Weissberg's talk will concentrate on Arendt's selection of Chaplin—a non-Jew—as an exemplary Jew, and discuss the appropriation of Chaplin's image in America, Germany, and Eastern Europe at that time, of which Arendt's essay takes part.

Liliane Weissberg is the Christopher H. Browne Distinguished Professor in Arts and Science and Professor of German and Comparative Literature at the University of Pennsylvania. Her recent books include a critical edition of Hannah Arendt's *Rahel Varnhagen: The Life of a Jewess* (1997) and the anthologies *Cultural Memory and the Construction of Identity* (with Dan Ben-Amos, 1999) and *Romancing the Shadow: Poe and Race* (with J. Gerald Kennedy, 2001). She has just completed a book on German-Jewish writing in the late eighteenth century, *Approaching Gentility: German-Jewish Autobiography and the Quest for Acculturation*.

**Friday, April 18, 2008**

**4:00 p.m.**

**Room 104 Gore Hall**

(Reception to follow lecture: President's Room, Blue & Gold Club)

This is the forty-fourth public lecture in the Distinguished Scholars Series sponsored by the Department of Foreign Languages & Literatures.