

CURRENTS: Humanities Work Now

Leonard Cohen, Neo-Sabbatianism, and Heterodox North American Jewish Identities

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Fall 2025 Graduate Student Fellow

This master's thesis project examines North American Jewish identities at the turn of the 21st century through a look at singer-songwriter Leonard Cohen's engagement with Sabbatianism. Sabbatianism, a messianic movement founded in the 17th century by the Turkish Jewish mystic Sabbatai Tsevi, blends aspects of Judaism, Islam, and Christianity and has long been considered heretical due to its radical rejection of traditional religious laws. In his later years, Cohen studied with and supported Lawrence G. Corey, leader of Donmeh West, a neo-Sabbatian group in Southern California. This study investigates the influence of Sabbatianism on Cohen and its resonance with countercultural Jewish communities while telling the little-known story of Donmeh West.

Generational Ruptures: Historical Shifts and the Political Identity of Kenya's Gen Z

Tracy Tinga, Assistant Professor, Media and Communication Studies

In June 2024, Kenya's 2024-2025 national budget sparked nationwide protests led largely by Gen Z Kenyans aged 18–25. Their dissent reflected mounting frustrations with rising taxation, the high cost of living, and state repression. Mobilizing across digital platforms, Gen Z transformed online dissent into mass demonstrations, signaling a generational rupture in Kenya's political landscape. This project situates the protests within broader historical and ideological shifts that have shaped Gen Z as a distinct social actor. It examines how this generation navigates identity and citizenship beyond ethnic affiliations, redefining belonging through digital engagement and political participation. Using historical and ideological analysis, the study draws on news media texts, Twitter (X) posts, and contemporary social media videos to explore how structural forces have produced and shaped the Gen Z political subject.

Wednesday, October 22

Noon to 1 p.m.

In-person, PAHB 216 and. online via WebEx

Advanced registration required for boxed lunch.