Crossing Borders: Creating a Class on Jewish Women’s Devotional Literature

Jeanne-Marie Musto

Description: Interest in collections of tkhines, that is, Jewish women's prayerbooks, primarily in Yiddish, has blossomed since the groundbreaking work of Chava Weissler in the 1990s. That is because these works speak to the growing field of gender studies, to the appeal of more personal forms of religious expression (especially in light of the pandemic) and to the evergreen theme of immigrant experience. Due to language barriers, however, they are largely known only through second-hand accounts and translation. The tkhines held in the Dorot Jewish Division provide an opportunity for introducing general audiences to the physical characteristics and structure of tkhines, how they contribute to understanding the past and how they can inform the present.

Jeanne-Marie Musto brings a background in art history and library history to her collaborative work with colleagues in the Dorot Jewish Division of the New York Public Library.