Formations of progressive or revolutionary hope have become increasingly rare, especially in the Euro-American context, since the 1960s. For many working out of the German traditions of dialectic and critique (in which “German-Jews” were central interlocutors), critique of Enlightenment has largely replaced visions of a better future. In broader cultural discourse, even the technotopias on display at the 1964 World’s Fair have disappeared, supplanted by frustrating debates about the reality of global scorching and the exhaustion of extricable minerals.

This seminar will articulate four broad, but tightly linked premises: 1) What we call “modernity” is characterized, inter alia, by a forward-looking ethic that tries to ensure and to hasten the arrival of a better, secular future that is in any case somehow promised us; 2) Through a series of blows largely but not exclusively to the dominance of Europe (World War I, World War II, the collapse of the Soviet Union), the inevitability and perhaps even the possibility of that secular future are no longer readily available to the imagination; 3) The catastrophe of Germany and of the Jews (related in complex ways to the historical dialectic of Christendom and the Jews) is produced as a central symptom of the collapse of the secular future; and 4) Critical scholarship has not yet fully attended to that collapse, let alone proposed ethics of temporality and/or history in response.

The seminar is open to scholars with a broad range of research foci - History Anthropology, Literary Studies, Jewish Studies, and German Studies as well as scholars in Postcolonial and Cultural Studies. Readings will vary in genre, but will include the work of Benjamin and Scholem, as well as foundational studies in the rhetoric of temporality and progress by Blumenberg, Koselleck, Habermas, Löwith, and others—taken both as sources of insight and as data for a lingering nostalgia for the lost secular future. We will engage participants’ own ongoing research with an eye toward advancing individual projects while working toward a new articulation of this situation that defines our common present.

**Eligibility:** Participation is open to faculty members in the Humanities and Social Sciences at colleges and universities in the U.S. and Canada. Applicants who have received their Ph.D.’s within the past two years but do not yet hold faculty appointments are encouraged to apply. Ph.D. candidates are not eligible.

**Stipends and Fees:** Accepted participants are eligible for a DAAD stipend, pending final confirmation of funding. There is a $50 course fee.

Form and instructions at [http://www.daad.org](http://www.daad.org). All application materials to be addressed to Professor Boyarin.