

# Modern Jewish Literature

## Jewish Studies 318/ Lit Trans 318

University of Wisconsin- Madison  
Spring 2016

Lecture: TR 1:00-2:15, Grainger 1295  
Section 301: R 11:00-11:50, Ingraham 116  
Section 302: T 3:30-4:20, Ingraham 215  
Section 303: W 2:25-3:15, Ingraham 215

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**Course Overview:** This course will provide students with a conceptual framework for understanding Modern Jewish Literature and deriving greater aesthetic pleasure and cultural understanding from its varied works. Alongside discussion of Benjamin Harshav's theory of Modern Jewish Culture, students will gain exposure to fictional and poetic works originally written in Hebrew, Yiddish, German, Russian, and English by eighteen prominent modern Jewish writers, including Nobel Laureates Shmuel Yosef Agnon and Isaac Bashevis Singer. Through their study, students will learn how the breakdown of pre-Modern Jewish society, immigration, the challenges of Jewish integration and exclusion, and the establishment of new Jewish communities, influenced the creation of literature during what Harshav refers to as the "Modern Jewish Revolution."

### Learning Goals:

- 1) Students will achieve grounding in Modern Jewish literature through encounter with seventeen of its leading authors and poets.
- 2) Students will learn how to employ Jewish history and culture to better interpret Modern Jewish literature.
- 3) Students will learn strategies for analyzing poetry and prose.
- 4) Students will learn how to communicate their thoughts more effectively in writing.

**Attendance, Tardiness, and Preparedness Policy:** Students are expected to attend **every** class, arrive **on time**, and **remain for the whole class period**. Attendance will be taken in section and monitored by the TA every lecture. More than three unexcused

discussion section absences or more than four unexcused lecture absences will lower student grades.

Students should **always** bring paper or electronic copies of assigned readings to class and discussion section for reference and be prepared to discuss them. Such preparedness will be an important component of the participation grade.

### **Breakdown of Grades (approximate):**

*Reading Questions and Quizzes: 20%* - While lecture will provide students with possible interpretations and approaches to the assigned literary and scholarly texts, lecture and class discussion can't replace direct encounter with them. Such encounter is not always easy and students will be provided with reading questions to help them start thinking and preparing for class discussion. Reading quizzes based on the reading questions provided and a free-write prompt will be administered throughout the semester to test student preparation. Quiz administration will take place during class. Absent students will not be given the opportunity to retake the quizzes without providing prior notification of tardiness or absence to the professor. *The lowest 2 quiz scores will be dropped* (including zeroes for absences or tardiness). *Students may also attend two Center for Jewish Studies (CJS) lectures and write two double-spaced, one-page summary/response papers whose grades will substitute for 2 quiz scores.* Approved lectures will be listed on the CJS website, (<http://jewishstudies.wisc.edu/events/>.) Approximately 20 quizzes will be administered over the course of the semester.

*Distinctive Feature Papers (500-1000 Words): 2 X 20%* - The aim of these assignments is to give students practice making observations and claims about ideas and arguments embedded in literary texts. These papers allow students to gain analytical traction with a text through construction of focused analyses based on recurring and distinctive textual features. Repeated details, passages, textual features, or moments that the author invites the reader to compare and contrast constitute examples of textual features suitable for such analysis. Every text is laced with numerous echoes and they may include repeated images, phrases, plot points, references, scene structures, or stylistic features. After identifying a distinctive recurrent feature, students will be asked to explore how this recurrent feature serves to illuminate a topic, concept, or literary or aesthetic quality that the text seems to be exploring or commenting upon. Further written and oral instructions, as well as examples of effective assignments, will be provided over the course of the semester. If you have difficulty preparing these assignments, it is recommended that you meet with the instructor or contact **The Writing Center** (<http://writing.wisc.edu/Individual/index.html>) to set up a meeting. *Papers should be proofread prior to submission.* **Distinctive Feature Paper drafts will be due on March 3<sup>rd</sup> & April 14<sup>th</sup>. Deadline for submission of final versions will be March 17<sup>th</sup> & April 28<sup>th</sup>. Students should submit their initial drafts and the Reverse Outline Peer Review of the draft together with the final version of the paper.** Every twenty-four hour delay in submission will reduce the grade 5%.

*Reverse Outline Peer Review Assignment: 2 X 5%* -Reverse outlines are outlines composed after a writing assignment has been completed, and they constitute a useful tool offering students useful feedback for revising and improving papers. We will be employing them as part of a peer review process intended to assist students in improving their writing prior to assignment of a formal grade. Each student will receive a paper of another student and will be asked to create a reverse outline of this paper to assist its author in revision of his/her paper. Composition of a reverse outline will involve the following steps: 1) Number each paragraph in the paper 2) On a separate sheet of paper list the main point (s) of each paragraph 3) Note whether each paragraph is properly focused or whether there are multiple main ideas competing for control of the paragraph. 4) Note whether each paragraph has a main idea. 5) Note any extraneous ideas in each paragraph that should be deleted or moved to a more appropriate paragraph. 6) Identify the textual repetition upon which the paper is based and note whether it proves sufficient to advance the asserted thesis. 7) Note whether the paper's organization aligns with the provisional thesis advanced by the author, and, if there is a lack of alignment, suggest ways to either revise the thesis or the paper's organization. **Reverse Outline Peer Review Assignments will be due on March 10<sup>th</sup> and April 21<sup>th</sup>.**

*Final: 20%* - **The final exam will be held from 2:45PM to 4:45PM on May 12<sup>th</sup>.** It will have two parts. Students will be asked to identify and discuss the significance of passages drawn from the literary works read over the course of the semester in the first section. Students will be asked to write two short essays comparing and contrasting works read over the course of the semester in the second part.

*Attendance and Participation: 10%* - Class and section attendance proves integral to student success. Attendance will be taken in section and monitored by the TA every lecture. More than four unexcused lecture absences and three discussion section absences will lower student grades. Active engagement in class and discussion section constitute an important part of the learning process and students will be rewarded for asking meaningful questions and making significant contributions to lecture and class discussion through their comments. Students will be provided with questions to guide their reading and should, at a minimum, be prepared to respond to these questions if called upon in lecture or section. Listening in lecture and class discussion only constitutes a starting point to student involvement. **Finally students observed surfing the web, texting, or talking with fellow students will have their participation grade lowered.**

*Grading Scale:*

A= 93-100%

AB= 88-92%

B= 83-87%

BC= 78-82%

C= 70-77%

D= 60-69%

F= 0-59%

### **Disability Policy:**

Students registered with disabilities at McBurney Disability Resource Center can receive accommodations with the presentation of the proper forms. Disabled students should meet with their TA during office hours or by appointment to arrange these accommodations. **Such meetings should be arranged as early in the semester as possible.**

### **Code of Academic Integrity:**

All students are expected to conduct their academic work according to university standards. Students should be aware of what constitutes academic misconduct and do their best to avoid it. To learn more on what constitutes academic integrity see <http://www.students.wisc.edu/doso/academic-integrity/>.

### **Food, Drink, Cell Phone, and Laptop Policy:**

Students are asked to refrain from eating and drinking during class. Cell phones should be turned off before class and *laptops will only be permitted during class discussion of literary texts.*

### **Required Texts:**

- Agnon, S. Y. *A Simple Story*. Trans. Hillel Halkin. Syracuse: Syracuse UP, 2000.
- Yeziarska, Anzia. *Bread Givers*. New York: Persea Books, 1975.

### **Reserves and Electronic Reserves:**

Copies of the required texts will be placed on reserve in College Library. The remaining readings will be placed on Learn@UW, but students are encouraged to purchase the books from which longer readings are drawn.

### **Schedule:**

#### ***General Introduction***

January 19 General Introduction

#### ***Introducing and Contextualizing Modern Jewish Literature (January 21-February 4)***

##### *Exploring Contemporary Jewish Literature*

**January 21** – Opting into Community - “Duck and Cover” by Molly Antopol  
Reading: Molly Antopol, *The UnAmericans*, 119-139 (Learn@UW).  
*Quiz*

**January 26** Thematizing the Holocaust – “What We Talk About When We Talk About Anne Frank” by Nathan Englander

Reading: Nathan Englander, What We Talk About When We Talk About Anne Frank, 3-32 (Learn@UW).

*Quiz*

**January 28** Reembracing Quietism and Folklore – “Gimpel the Fool”

Reading: Isaac Bashevis Singer, Collected Stories: Gimpel the Fool to The Letter Writer, 5-19 (Learn@UW).

*Quiz*

### *Contextualizing Modern Jewish Literature*

**February 2** The Modern Jewish Revolution

Reading: Harshav, Language in Time of Revolution, 3-75 (Learn@UW).

*Quiz*

**February 4** The Modern Jewish Revolution (cont.); “The God of Israel” by A. Leyeles

Reading: Leyeles, American Yiddish Poetry, 70-73, 76-79 (Learn@UW).

*Quiz*

## ***East European Jewry in Crisis (February 9 – February 25)***

**February 9** “The Brief Travels of Benjamin the Third” by S. Y. Abramovitch

Reading: Abramovitch, Tales of Mendele, 299-391 (Learn@UW).

*Quiz*

**February 11** “The Brief Travels of Benjamin the Third” (continued)

**February 16** A Simple Story by S. Y. Agnon – PART 1

Reading: Agnon, A Simple Story, 3-100.

*Quiz*

**February 18** A Simple Story - PART 1 (continued)

**February 23** A Simple Story by S. Y. Agnon – PART 2

Reading: Agnon, A Simple Story, 100-230.

*Quiz*

**February 25** A Simple Story by S. Y. Agnon – PART 2 (continued)

## ***Assimilation and Its Discontents (March 1– March 17)***

**March 1** “Serkele, or, In Mourning for a Brother” by Shloyme Ettinger

Reading: Ettinger, Landmark Yiddish Plays, 113-200 (Learn@UW).

*Quiz*

**March 3** “Serkele, or, In Mourning for a Brother” (continued)  
***DISTINCTIVE FEATURE PAPER #1 DRAFT DUE***

**March 8** “The Railroad Stories” by Sholem Aleichem

Reading: Sholem Aleichem, Tevye the Dairyman and The Railroad Stories, 135-6, 163-177, 207-229, 238-255, 274-284.

*Quiz*

**March 10** “The Railroad Stories” by Sholem Aleichem (continued)  
***REVERSE OUTLINE PEER REVIEW ASSIGNMENT #1 DUE***

**March 15** “Professor Bernhardi” by Arthur Schnitzler

Reading: Schnitzler, Round Dance and Other Plays , 289-400 (Learn@UW).

*Quiz*

**March 17** “Professor Bernhardi ” (continued)

***DISTINCTIVE FEATURE PAPER #1 FINAL VERSION DUE***

**March 22 & March 24** Spring Break

## ***Leaving Europe: Immigration as Solution: (March 29-April 14)***

### *America*

**March 29** Breadgivers by Anzia Yeziarska - PART I

Reading: Yeziarska, Bread Givers, 1-151.

*Quiz*

**March 31** Breadgivers – PART I (continued); Jacob Glatshetyn “Sheeny Mike” & “On The Butcher Block”

Reading: Glatshetyn, American Yiddish Poetry, 203-7, 240-5, & 313-317 (Learn@UW).

*Quiz*

**April 5** Breadgivers by Anzia Yeziarska - PART II

Reading: Yeziarska, Bread Givers, 155-297.

*Quiz*

**April 7** Breadgivers – PART II (continued); Moyshe-Leyb Halpern “Salute” and “Sacco-Vanzetti”

Reading: Halpern, American Yiddish Poetry: A Bilingual Anthology, 388-391, 430-3, & 436-9 (Learn@UW).

*Quiz*

### *Palestine*

**April 12** “Nerves” by Yosef Chaim Brenner

Reading: Brenner, Eight Great Hebrew Short Novels, 31-58 (Learn@UW).

Quiz

**April 14** “Until Daybreak” by Moshe Shamir

Reading: Shamir, Until Daybreak, 114-137 (Learn@UW).

Quiz

***DISTINCTIVE FEATURE PAPER #2 DRAFT DUE***

## ***World Revolution as Solution (April 19 -April 21)***

*Russian Revolution*

**April 19** Red Cavalry by Isaac Babel

Reading: Babel, The Collected Stories of Isaac Babel, 197-204, 208-212, 227-236, 290-310, 331-333, 362 (Learn@UW).

Quiz

**April 21** Red Cavalry (continued)

***REVERSE OUTLINE PEER REVIEW ASSIGNMENT #2 DUE***

## ***Winding Down The Revolution (April 26- May 5)***

*America*

**April 26** “Eli the Fanatic” by Philip Roth

Reading: Roth, Goodbye Columbus, 247-298.

Quiz

**April 28** “Eli the Fanatic” (continued)

***DISTINCTIVE FEATURE PAPER #2 FINAL VERSION DUE***

*Israel*

**May 3** “Departure” by Yaakov Shabtai

Reading: Shabtai, Uncle Peretz Takes Off, 217-227 (Learn@UW).

Quiz

**May 5** Conclusions

**MAY 12 FINAL EXAM 2:45-4:45**