

Modern Jewish Literature

Jewish Studies 318/ Lit Trans 318

University of Wisconsin- Madison

Spring 2017

Lecture: TR 11:00-12:15, Chemistry 1361

Section 301: R 9:55-10:45, Ingraham 215

Section 302: T 3:30-4:20, Ingraham 115

Section 303: W 2:25-3:15, Ingraham 223

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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 seventeen 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 instructor 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 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, Quizzes, and Response Papers: 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 texts. Such encounter is not always easy and students will be provided with reading questions to help them start thinking and preparing for class discussion. Response Papers and 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/.](http://jewishstudies.wisc.edu/events/)) Approximately 20 quizzes and response papers will be administered over the course of the semester.

Distinctive Feature Papers (500-750 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 repetitions and they may include recurrent images, phrases, plot points, references, scene structures, or stylistic features. After identifying a repeated distinctive 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, the teaching assistant, 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 2nd & April 13th. Deadline for submission of final versions will be March 16th & April 27th. Students should submit electronic copies of their drafts to the appropriate drop box and bring physical copies of their paper to class on the due date for their peer**

reviewers. Every twenty-four hour delay in submission of either the draft or the final paper will reduce the grade 5%.

Peer Review Assignments: 2 X 5% -The peer review assignments will have two parts. The first part of the assignment will ask students to compose reverse outlines of other students' papers. Not only will these reverse outlines help the students whose papers are reviewed revise their work and receive better grades, they will also help reviewers think more deeply about what constitutes a good paper. One puts together a reverse outline after a writing assignment has been completed, and it allows the reviewer to track how effectively a paper communicates its ideas. Composition of a reverse outline involves the following steps: 1) The reviewer numbers each paragraph in the paper 2) The reviewer then notes the main point or points of each paragraph on a separate sheet of paper 3) The reviewer then comments on the content of each paragraph. Does the paragraph have a clear purpose, is it attempting to accomplish too much, or does it serve no purpose at all in the paper? 4) The reviewer notes any extraneous ideas in each paragraph and either recommends that they be removed from the paper or moved to a more appropriate paragraph. In the second part of the assignment the peer reviewer will answer three questions about the paper: 1) After identifying the textual repetition upon which the paper is based, the reviewer will be asked to comment on whether it proves sufficient to advance the asserted thesis. *If the paper is not constructed around a textual repetition, the reviewer would alert the writer to this fact.* 2) After noting whether the paper's organization aligns with the provisional thesis advanced by the author, the reviewer should make suggestions about ways to either revise the thesis or the paper's organization if there is a lack of alignment. *If the paper lacks a viable thesis, the reviewer should alert the writer to this fact.* 3) Does the paper feature excessive plot summary? Reviewers should make suggestions about what plot summary can be removed. **Peer Review Assignments will be due on March 9th and April 20th. Electronic copies of the Peer Review Assignment should indicate the name of the person whose paper is being reviewed both in the file name and at the opening of the peer review.**

Final: 20% - **The final exam will be held from 12:25PM to 2:25PM on May 11th.** 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 instructor in 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 17 General Introduction

Introducing and Contextualizing Modern Jewish Literature

(January 19-February 2)

Exploring Contemporary Jewish Literature

January 19 – Opting into Community - “Duck and Cover” by Molly Antopol

Reading: Molly Antopol, The UnAmericans, 119-139 (Learn@UW).

Quiz

January 24 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 26 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

January 31 The Modern Jewish Revolution

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

Response Paper

February 2 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 7 – February 23)

February 7 “The Brief Travels of Benjamin the Third” by S. Y. Abramovitch

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

Quiz

February 9 “The Brief Travels of Benjamin the Third” (continued)

February 14 A Simple Story by S. Y. Agnon – PART 1

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

Quiz

February 16 A Simple Story - PART 1 (continued)

February 21 A Simple Story by S. Y. Agnon – PART 2

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

Quiz

February 23 A Simple Story by S. Y. Agnon – PART 2 (continued)

Assimilation and Its Discontents (February 28– March 16)

February 28 “Serkele, or, In Mourning for a Brother” by Shloyme Ettinger

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

Quiz

March 2 “Serkele, or, In Mourning for a Brother” (continued)

DISTINCTIVE FEATURE PAPER #1 DRAFT DUE

March 7 “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 9 “The Railroad Stories” by Sholem Aleichem (continued)

PEER REVIEW ASSIGNMENT #1 DUE

March 14 “Professor Bernhardi” by Arthur Schnitzler

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

Quiz

March 16 “Professor Bernhardi” (continued)

DISTINCTIVE FEATURE PAPER #1 FINAL VERSION DUE

March 21 & March 23 Spring Break

Leaving Europe: Immigration as Solution: (March 28-April 14)

America

March 28 Breadgivers by Anzia Yeziarska - PART I

Reading: Yeziarska, Bread Givers, 1-151.

Quiz

March 30 Breadgivers – PART I (continued); Jacob Glatshetyn “Sheeny Mike”

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

Response Paper

April 4 Breadgivers by Anzia Yeziarska - PART II

Reading: Yeziarska, Bread Givers, 155-297.

Quiz

April 6 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).

Response Paper

Palestine

April 11 CLASS CANCELLED PASSOVER

April 13 “Nerves” by Yosef Chaim Brenner

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

Quiz

DISTINCTIVE FEATURE PAPER #2 DRAFT DUE

April 18 CLASS CANCELLED PASSOVER

April 20 “Until Daybreak” by Moshe Shamir

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

Quiz

PEER REVIEW ASSIGNMENT #2 DUE

World Revolution as Solution (April 25 -April 27)

Russian Revolution

April 25 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 27 Red Cavalry (continued)

DISTINCTIVE FEATURE PAPER #2 FINAL VERSION DUE

Winding Down the Revolution (May 2- May 4)

America

May 2 “Eli the Fanatic” by Philip Roth

Reading: Roth, Goodbye Columbus, 247-298.

Quiz

Israel

May 4 "Departure" by Yaakov Shabtai; Conclusions

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

Quiz

MAY 11 FINAL EXAM 2:45-4:45