

# Modern Jewish Literature

## Hebrew Studies 318/ Jewish Studies 318

University of Wisconsin- Madison  
Spring 2012

Lecture: MW 4:00-5:15, Van Hise 104  
Section 301: W 12:05-12:55, Van Hise 383  
Section 302: M 1:20-2:10, Soc Sci 4322  
Section 303: W 2:25-3:15, Van Hise 491

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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."

**Attendance, Tardiness, and Preparedness Policy:** Students are expected to attend **every** class and to arrive **on time**. Attendance will be taken in section and monitored by the TA every lecture. Excessive unexcused absences will lower student grades (more than five discussion section and lecture absences). In addition, 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 Quizzes: 25%* - While lecture and discussion section will provide students with possible interpretations and approaches to the assigned literary texts, lecture and class

discussion are not intended as a substitute for direct encounter with the assigned readings. For this reason, reading quizzes will be administered throughout the semester to test student familiarity with assigned readings. Students will be asked short factual questions whose answers should be evident to those who have read the material. Quiz administration will take place at the beginning of class and tardy or absent students will not be given the opportunity to retake the quizzes without prior notification of tardiness or absence. *The lowest 2 quiz scores will be dropped* (including zeroes for absences or tardiness). In cases of illness or personal emergency, *a maximum of 2 quiz scores may be replaced* by attending a Center for Jewish Studies (CJS) lecture and writing a double-spaced, one-page summary/response. Students must, if at all possible, notify Prof. Hollander or their TA before the time of the quiz in order to be able to exercise this option. (N.B. This option is in addition to the lowest 2 scores that will be dropped. Approved lectures will be listed on the CJS website, <http://jewishstudies.wisc.edu/events/>.) Approximately 19 quizzes will be administered over the course of the semester.

*Mid-Semester Paper (5 Pages): 20%* - The literature read over the course of the semester will be divided into six thematic sections. After the completion of the first three sections, students will be assigned a paper where they will be asked to compare and contrast two works from the same thematic unit or two works drawn from different thematic units. Students will be expected to develop a thesis and argue it in their papers. If you have difficulty doing this, it is recommended that you meeting with your TA or contact **The Writing Center** (<http://writing.wisc.edu/Individual/index.html>) to set up a meeting. Papers should also be proofread prior to submission. **Papers are due on Wed., April 11<sup>th</sup>.** Late papers will be accepted, but every twenty-four hour delay in submission will reduce the grade 5%.

*Final: 25%* - **The final exam will be held from 7:45AM to 9:45AM on May 19<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: 15%* - Class and section attendance proves integral to student success. Attendance will be taken in section and monitored by the TA every lecture. Excessive unexcused absences will lower student grades (more than five discussion section and lecture absences). 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. While preferable to surfing the web, texting, or talking with fellow students, listening in lecture and class discussion constitutes only a starting point to student involvement

*Response Paper: 15%*

*Option 1* – Shalom Aleichem’s story cycle “Tevye the Diaryman” serves as the inspiration for the famed musical and film *Fiddler on the Roof*. Students may view the filmic adaptation

and write a 3-4 page paper comparing it with the literary original. Students will be asked to write a clearly organized and argued essay reflecting on the changes made in the filmic adaptation and what they can teach about the Americanization of East European Jewry. **Due on Mon., May 7<sup>th</sup>.**

*Option 2* – Philip Roth’s novella “Goodbye Columbus” was adapted for film. Students may view the filmic adaptation and write a 3-4 page paper comparing it with its literary predecessor. Students will be asked to write a clearly organized and argued essay reflecting on the changes made in the filmic adaptation and what they can teach about attempts to integrate Jewishness into the American narrative. **Due on Mon., May 7<sup>th</sup>.**

### **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 misconduct see (<http://students.wisc.edu/saja/pdf/UWS14.pdf>).

### **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 should be employed for class purposes only.

### **Required Texts:**

- Agnon, S. Y. *A Simple Story*. Trans. Hillel Halkin. Syracuse: Syracuse UP, 2000.
- Roth, Philip. *Goodbye Columbus: And Five Other Stories*. New York: Vintage International, 1994.
- Shalom Aleichem. *Tevye the Dairyman and The Railroad Stories*. Trans. Hillel Halkin. New York: Schocken, 1987, 3-134.
- Schnitzler, Arthur. *Round Dance and Other Plays*. Trans. J. M. Q. Davies. London: Oxford UP, 2008.
- Yeziarska, Anzia. *Bread Givers*. New York: Persea Books, 1975.

### **Optional Films:**

*Fiddler on the Roof*. Dir. Norman Jewison. 1971. DVD. MGM, 1998.

*Goodbye Columbus*. Dir. Larry Peerce. 1969. DVD. Paramount, 2004.

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

Copies of the required texts will be placed on reserve as 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:**

## ***Introducing and Contextualizing Modern Jewish Literature (January 23-February 8)***

### **January 23** General Introduction

#### *Exploring Contemporary Jewish Literature*

**January 25** Thematizing the Holocaust – “On the Grounds of the Complex Commemorating the Nazis’ Treatment of the Jews” by Todd Hasak-Lowy and “Shoes” and “Siren” by Etgar Keret

Reading: Todd Hasak-Lowy, The Task of This Translator, 1-20 (Learn@UW).

Etgar Keret, The Bus Driver Who Wanted to Be God & Other Stories, 41-43, 57-60 (Learn@UW).

*Quiz*

**January 30** Reembracing Quietism and Folklore – “Gimpel the Fool,” “From the Diary of One Not Born,” and “The Corpses Go Dancing” by Isaac Bashevis Singer and “Lazar Malkin Enters Heaven” by Steve Stern

Reading: Isaac Bashevis Singer, Collected Stories: Gimpel the Fool to The Letter Writer, 5-19, 103-111, and 682-694 (Learn@UW).

Steve Stern, Lazar Malkin Enters Heaven, 27-40 (Learn @UW).

*Quiz*

### **February 1** Reembracing Quietism and Folklore (continued)

#### *Contextualizing Modern Jewish Literature*

**February 6** The Modern Jewish Revolution

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

*Quiz*

**February 8** 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 13 – March 7)***

**February 13** “The Brief Travels of Benjamin the Third” by S. Y. Abramovitch

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

*Quiz*

**February 15** “The Brief Travels of Benjamin the Third” (continued)

**February 20** “Tevye the Dairyman” by Shalom Aleichem

Reading: Aleichem, Tevye the Dairyman and The Railroad Stories, 3-134.

*Quiz*

**February 22** “Tevye the Dairyman” (continued)

**February 27** A Simple Story by S. Y. Agnon – PART 1

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

*Quiz*

**February 29** A Simple Story - PART 1 (continued)

**March 5** CLASS CANCELLED

**March 7** A Simple Story by S. Y. Agnon – PART 2

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

*Quiz*

***Assimilation and Its Discontents (March 12– March 26)***

**March 12** “Serkele, or, In Mourning for a Brother” by Shloyme Ettinger

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

*Quiz*

**March 14** CLASS CANCELLED

**March 19** “Serkele, or, In Mourning for a Brother” (continued)

**March 21** “Professor Bernhardi” by Arthur Schnitzler

Reading: Schnitzler, Round Dance and Other Plays, 289-400.

*Quiz*

**March 26** “Professor Bernhardi ” (continued)

***Immigration as Solution: Leaving Europe (March 28-April 23)***

*America*

**March 28** Breadgivers by Anzia Yeziarska - PART I

Reading: Yeziarska, Bread Givers, 1-151.

*Quiz*

**April 2 & 4** SPRING BREAK

**April 9** Breadgivers – PART I (continued); Jacob Glatshteyn “Sheeny Mike” & “On The Butcher Block”

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

*Quiz*

**April 11** Breadgivers by Anzia Yeziarska - PART II  
Reading: Yeziarska, Bread Givers, 155-297.  
*Quiz*

**April 11** MIDTERM PAPER DUE

**April 16** 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 18** “Nerves” by Yosef Chaim Brenner  
Reading: Brenner, Eight Great Hebrew Short Novels, 31-58 (Learn@UW).  
*Quiz*

**April 23** “Until Daybreak” by Moshe Shamir  
Reading: Shamir, Until Daybreak, 114-137 (Learn@UW).  
*Quiz*

***World Revolution as Solution (April 25-April 30)***

*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 30** Red Cavalry (continued)

***Winding Down The Revolution (May 2- May 9)***

*America*

**May 2** “Goodbye, Columbus” by Philip Roth  
Reading: Roth, Goodbye Columbus, 1-136.  
*Quiz*

**May 7** “Goodbye, Columbus” (continued)

**May 7** RESPONSE PAPER DUE

*Israel*

**May 9** "Departure" by Yaakov Shabtai; Conclusions

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

*Quiz*