

Modern Jewish Literature

Hebrew Studies 318/ Jewish Studies 318

University of Wisconsin- Madison
Spring 2013

Lecture: MW 4:00-5:15, Van Hise 104
Section 301: W 12:05-12:55, Van Hise 590
Section 302: M 1:20-2:10, Van Hise 205
Section 303: W 2:25-3:15, Van Hise 391

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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 eighteen 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 come to employ analytical skills, history and culture, and basic knowledge of Modern Jewish literature to independently read and evaluate works of Modern Jewish literature.
- 5) Students will learn how to more effectively communicate their thoughts in writing.

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 three discussion section 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: 20% - 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. Consequently 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 during class and absent students will not be given the opportunity to retake the quizzes without providing prior notification of tardiness or absence to the TA or 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 19 quizzes will be administered over the course of the semester.

Mid-Semester Paper (5 Pages): 25% - 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 Mon., April 15th.** 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 12th.** 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. Excessive unexcused absences will lower student grades (more than three discussion section 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. 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.**

Response Paper: 20%

Option 1 – Students will be provided with 2-3 texts with information about the author removed. Employing the conceptual framework for understanding Modern Jewish Literature provided over the course of the semester, students will be asked to select one of these texts and write a clearly organized and argued 4 page essay. In this essay students will be asked to make a hypothesis about the author’s identity supported by a discussion of the work’s primary themes and its relationship to other works read over the course of the semester.

Option 2 – 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 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 how Americans have come to view the East European Jewish past. **Due on Mon., May 6th.**

Option 3– Philip Roth’s novella “Goodbye Columbus” was adapted for film. Students may view the filmic adaptation and write a 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 6th.**

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 6)**

January 23 General Introduction

Exploring Contemporary Jewish Literature

January 28 Thematizing the Holocaust – “On the Grounds of the Complex Commemorating the Nazis’ Treatment of the Jews” by Todd Hasak-Lowy 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, 57-60

(Learn@UW).

Quiz

January 30 Reembracing Quietism and Folklore – “Gimpel the Fool,” and “From the Diary of One Not Born,” 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(Learn@UW).

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

Quiz

Contextualizing Modern Jewish Literature

February 4 The Modern Jewish Revolution

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

Quiz

February 6 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 11 – March 6)

February 11 “The Brief Travels of Benjamin the Third” by S. Y. Abramovitch
Reading: Abramovitsch, Tales of Mendele, 299-391 (Learn@UW).

Quiz

February 13 “The Brief Travels of Benjamin the Third” (continued)

February 18 “Tevye the Dairyman” by Shalom Aleichem
Reading: Aleichem, Tevye the Dairyman and The Railroad Stories, 3-134.

Quiz

February 20 “Tevye the Dairyman” (continued)

February 25 A Simple Story by S. Y. Agnon – PART 1
Reading: Agnon, A Simple Story, 3-100.

Quiz

February 27 A Simple Story - PART 1 (continued)

March 4 A Simple Story by S. Y. Agnon – PART 2
Reading: Agnon, A Simple Story, 100-230.

Quiz

March 6 A Simple Story by S. Y. Agnon – PART 2 (continued)

Assimilation and Its Discontents (March 11– March 20)

March 11 “Serkele, or, In Mourning for a Brother” by Shloyme Ettinger
Reading: Ettinger, Landmark Yiddish Plays, 113-200 (Learn@UW).

Quiz

March 13 “Serkele, or, In Mourning for a Brother” (continued)

March 18 “Professor Bernhardt” by Arthur Schnitzler
Reading: Schnitzler, Round Dance and Other Plays, 289-400.

Quiz

March 20 “Professor Bernhardt ” (continued)

March 25 & 27 Spring Break

April 1 CLASS CANCELLED FOR PASSOVER HOLIDAY

Immigration as Solution: Leaving Europe (April 3-April 22)

America

April 3 Breadgivers by Anzia Yeziarska - PART I

Reading: Yeziarska, Bread Givers, 1-151.

Quiz

April 8 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 10 Breadgivers by Anzia Yeziarska - PART II

Reading: Yeziarska, Bread Givers, 155-297.

Quiz

April 15 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

MIDTERM PAPER DUE

Palestine

April 17 “Nerves” by Yosef Chaim Brenner

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

Quiz

April 22 “Until Daybreak” by Moshe Shamir

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

Quiz

World Revolution as Solution (April 24 -April 29)

Russian Revolution

April 24 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 29 Red Cavalry (continued)

Winding Down The Revolution (May 1- May 8)

America

May 1 “Goodbye, Columbus” by Philip Roth

Reading: Roth, Goodbye Columbus, 1-136.

Quiz

May 6 “Goodbye, Columbus” (continued)

May 6 RESPONSE PAPER DUE

Israel

May 8 “Departure” by Yaakov Shabtai; Conclusions

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

Quiz