

Modern Jewish Literature

Jewish Studies 318/ Lit Trans 318

University of Wisconsin- Madison
Spring 2015

Lecture: MW 1:00-2:15, Van Hise 594
Section 301: R 11:05-11:50, Ingraham 215
Section 302: R 1:20-2:10, Ingraham 214
Section 303: F 2:25-3:15, Ingraham 225

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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 learn how to more effectively communicate their thoughts in writing.

Attendance, Tardiness, and Preparedness Policy: STAY IN CLASS 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. Excessive unexcused absences will lower student grades (more than three discussion section

absences or more than four 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 Questions and Quizzes: 20% - While lecture will provide students with possible interpretations and approaches to the assigned oral, literary, scholarly, and filmic texts, lecture and class discussion can't replace direct encounter with them. Nonetheless such encounter is not always easy and students will be provided with reading questions to help them start them 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/.](http://jewishstudies.wisc.edu/events/)) Approximately 19 quizzes will be administered over the course of the semester.

Textual Echo Papers (500-1000 Words): 2 X 20% - The aim of these assignments is to give students the opportunity to practice making observations and claims about ideas and arguments embedded in oral, literary, and filmic texts. These papers allow students to gain analytical traction with a text by discerning textual "echoes" around which to build a focused analysis. For purposes of this paper, a "textual echo" can be understood as a sequence of details, passages, textual features, or moments that the narrator, author, or director invite the reader to compare and contrast. Every text is laced with numerous echoes and they may include repeated images, phrases, plot points, references, scene structures, or stylistic features. After identifying such textual echoes, students will be asked to explore how a particular textual echo considered interesting or important serves to illuminate a topic, concept, or literary or aesthetic feature 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.* **Textual Echo Paper drafts will be due on March 4th & April 15th. Deadline for submission of final versions will be March 18th & April 29th. 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 following completion of a writing assignment they outline. A useful tool for helping students consider how best to revise and improve a paper, 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 the main point of each paragraph is reflected in a topic sentence at its outset 5) Note any extraneous ideas in each paragraph that should be deleted or moved to a more appropriate paragraph. 6) Following completion of the whole outline, note whether the paper's organization aligns with the provisional thesis advanced by the author. If there is a disconnect between the paper's organization and the provisional thesis suggest ways to either revise the thesis or the paper's outline. **Reverse Outline Peer Review Assignments will be due on March 11th and April 22th.**

Final: 20% - **The final exam will be held from 2:45PM to 4:45PM 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.**

Extra-Credit: 3% - On February 5th there will be a symposium about Israeli literature and culture featuring author Assaf Gavron that will take place at the UW Hillel. The symposium will be divided into two sessions. The first session, taking place between 12 and 2PM, will focus on the representation of Tel Aviv; the second session, occurring from 7 to 9PM, will center on representation of the West Bank in Israeli literature. **Students are strongly encouraged to attend both sessions, but can choose to attend only one. Attending students can submit a 1-2 page paper reflecting on the relationship between each individual session and our course's theme. Each reflection paper will be awarded a maximum of 1.5% extra-credit. The Submission Deadline for Extra-Credit Assignment is February 20th.**

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 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 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.
- 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.

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 21-February 4)**

January 21 General Introduction

Exploring Contemporary Jewish Literature

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

Reading: Nathan Englander, What We Talk About When We Talk About Ann 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: Abramovitsch, 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 2– March 18)

March 2 “Serkele, or, In Mourning for a Brother” by Shloyme Ettinger

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

Quiz

March 4 “Serkele, or, In Mourning for a Brother” (continued)

TEXTUAL ECHO PAPER #1 DRAFT DUE

March 9 “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 11 “The Railroad Stories” by Sholem Aleichem (continued)

REVERSE OUTLINE PEER REVIEW ASSIGNMENT #1 DUE

March 16 “Professor Bernhardi” by Arthur Schnitzler

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

Quiz

March 18 “Professor Bernhardi ” (continued)

TEXTUAL ECHO PAPER #1 FINAL VERSION DUE

Leaving Europe: Immigration as Solution: (March 23-April 17)

America

March 23 Breadgivers by Anzia Yeziarska - PART I

Reading: Yeziarska, Bread Givers, 1-151.

Quiz

March 25 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

March 30 & April 1 Spring Break

April 6 Breadgivers by Anzia Yeziarska - PART II

Reading: Yeziarska, Bread Givers, 155-297.

Quiz

April 8 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 13 “Nerves” by Yosef Chaim Brenner

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

Quiz

April 15 “Until Daybreak” by Moshe Shamir

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

Quiz

TEXTUAL ECHO PAPER #2 DRAFT DUE

World Revolution as Solution (April 20 -April 22)

Russian Revolution

April 20 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 22 Red Cavalry (continued)

REVERSE OUTLINE PEER REVIEW ASSIGNMENT #2 DUE

Winding Down The Revolution (April 27- May 6)

America

April 27 “Eli the Fanatic” by Philip Roth

Reading: Roth, Goodbye Columbus, 247-298.

Quiz

April 29 “Eli the Fanatic” (continued)

TEXTUAL ECHO PAPER #1 FINAL VERSION DUE

Israel

May 4 “Departure” by Yaakov Shabtai

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

Quiz

May 6 5 TEXTUAL ECHO PAPER #3 DUE

May 6 Conclusions

MAY 12 FINAL EXAM 2:45-4:45