

ENGL 351 / 551 Jewish American Literature

Dr. Norman Finkelstein

Hinkle 239; 745-2041

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Office Hours: T 11:30-12:30, W 6:00-6:45 & by app't.

Texts:

Ozick, *The Shawl*

Roth, *The Plot Against America*

Rothenberg, *Triptych*

Chabon, *The Yiddish Policemen's Union*

Reich, *My Holocaust*

Cole, *Things On Which I've Stumbled*

Texts online, on Canvas, or sent via e-mail

Description & Expectations:

In this course, we will study works by representative Jewish-American authors from the early 20th century through the present, focusing on poetry and fiction. Among our concerns will be such prevalent Jewish themes as exile, assimilation, self-hatred, repentance, and redemption. We will consider the history of the Jews in this country, and the changes in their culture and religion as they struggle to define themselves and find their place in a predominately gentile and secular American society. We will relate this history to Jewish modes of writing, and to other literary and cultural traditions which Jews encounter, and help to transform, in America. We will also observe the intertextual relations among succeeding generations of Jewish writers. We will deal with the effects of anti-Semitism and of the Holocaust upon the Jewish-American situation, with changes in gender relations among American Jews, and with the survival of a Jewish sensibility in the American diaspora.

Jewish American Literature is an upper-level English course designed primarily for advanced undergraduate English majors, English M.A. students, and those interested in Jewish studies. Students are assumed to have the requisite writing and research skills for such a course, and basic knowledge of literary interpretation. The course will be taught through a combination of lecture and discussion. Students are expected to attend regularly, to arrive promptly (because lateness is rude and disruptive), to read the material for discussion thoroughly, and to be prepared with questions and comments about our work. Class participation, including questions about the readings, is strongly encouraged. Because some of the cultural, religious, and historical contexts of the readings may be unfamiliar to many students, keep in mind that the questions you ask may be those of your classmates too—so don't hesitate!

Course Policies

Attendance. Regular attendance is a requirement of this course. I will permit two unexcused absences per semester. More missed classes will adversely affect your grade. If a problem of any sort arises, please get in touch with me. We can usually work it out.

Lateness. Coming late to class is rude and disruptive, and indicates a lack of respect for your instructor and your fellow students. I expect you to arrive on time. If you do come late, please slip in unobtrusively. If I see that you are chronically late (that is, more than a couple of times in a row), then we need to talk.

Cell phones. Cell phone use is forbidden. Upon entering the classroom, if not before, turn off your phone immediately and remove it from your desk. Don't even think of texting during class—I will ask you to leave.

Laptops and Tablets. I permit the use of laptops and tablets in class, because I know that some students legitimately use them to take notes and read electronic versions of the texts. However, I reserve the right to stroll over behind you and take a look at the screen. If I see Facebook pictures of your best friend getting drunk last Saturday night, you will be invited to continue your viewing outside of the classroom.

Email. Check your Xavier email at least twice classes and twice between classes for course updates, assignments, additional materials, etc. Feel free to email me with your questions, comments and concerns. I usually turn off my computer about 10 PM, so if you email me at 3 AM, don't expect an answer till at least noon on the next day. A good start to your email is "Dear Dr. Finkelstein." "Hey" just doesn't cut it.

Papers. Papers are to be turned in at the start of class on the day they are due. Papers sent by email will not be accepted. Papers turned in by noon on the following day to my mailbox in Hinkle Hall will be accepted, graded and returned, with no comments and no opportunities for rewrites. Papers will not be accepted after this time—the grade for the assignment will be an automatic F. Rewrite policy: I encourage you to rewrite your paper if you receive a grade in the C range or lower. A grade of F requires a rewrite. Please meet with me before you begin rewriting. Turn in your first version along with your rewrite on the due date we agree upon.

Recordings. You may record this class using audio or video for personal use as a study tool, but you must inform me that you are doing so prior to recording. I reserve the right to have access to any recordings that you make.

Plagiarism. From the Xavier Catalog: "All work submitted for academic evaluation must be the student's own. Certainly, the activities of other scholars will influence all students. However, the direct and unattributed use of another's efforts is prohibited as is the use of any work untruthfully submitted as one's own. Penalties for violations of this policy may include one or more of the following: a zero for that assignment or test, an "F" in the course, and expulsion from the University. The dean of the college in which the student is enrolled is to be informed in writing of all such incidents, though the teacher has full authority to assign the grade for the assignment, test, or course. If disputes of interpretation arise, the student, faculty member, and chair should attempt to resolve the difficulty. If this is unsatisfactory,

the dean will rule in the matter. As a final appeal, the academic vice president will call a committee of tenured faculty for the purpose of making a final determination.”

Assignments for ENGL 351:

Take-home mid-term (25%)

In-class final (25%)

Research paper, including a written proposal and annotated bibliography (25%)

Comparative paper (15%)

Class participation, including attendance, quality and consistency of questions and comments throughout the semester (10%)

Assignments for ENGL 551:

Take-home mid-term (25%)

In-class final (25%)

Research paper, including a written proposal and annotated bibliography (25%)

Class presentation and leading class discussion (15%)

Class participation, including attendance, quality and consistency of questions and comments throughout the semester (10%)

Calendar

August 26 Introduction / Cahan, “The Imported Bridegroom” (online)

Sept. 2 Poetry of Charles Reznikoff (online)

Sept. 9 Malamud short stories (online)

Sept. 16 The Shawl

Sept. 23 The Plot Against America

Sept. 30 The Plot Against America Comparative paper due (351)

Oct. 7 Triptych

Oct. 14 The Yiddish Policemen’s Union Take-home mid-term exam due

Oct. 21 The Yiddish Policemen’s Union

Oct. 28 The Yiddish Policemen’s Union / Things On Which I’ve Stumbled

Nov. 4 Things On Which I've Stumbled / My Holocaust

Nov. 11 My Holocaust

Nov. 18 My Holocaust

Nov. 25 Thanksgiving holiday—NO CLASS

Dec. 2 Jewish American song lyrics—Dylan, Cohen, etc.

Dec. 9 Film: "A Serious Man" (Coen Brothers)

Dec. 16 Final Exam