

Modern Jewish History/JUS 370a-002

Introduction to Modern Yiddish Culture

The University of Arizona/Spring 2012

Monday/Wednesday 4:00-5:15PM, Modern Languages,

Room 413

Dr. Gil Ribak

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Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays 2:30-3:30PM, and by appointment

Course Description:

Yiddish has been the language of Ashkenazi Jews for nearly a millennium. By 1939 it was the language of approximately 11 million Jews, comprising more than two-thirds of world Jewry. Since the early Middle Ages Yiddish had been intimately interwoven into Jewish life and closely involved in the evolution of Jewish religious practices, customs and folkways. In more recent times Yiddish served as the vehicle for the proliferation of an array of movements such as Hasidism, nationalism, and socialism. As Jewish immigration to Western Europe, North and South America, the Land of Israel, Australia, and South Africa created new centers of Yiddish-speaking populations, Yiddish educational institutions, literature, theater and press developed and achieved a high level of creativity and ingenuity.

Yet the emergence of modern Yiddish culture was highly contested, reflecting the vicissitudes of modern Jewish identity and internal debates on the future of the Jewish people. The course is an introduction to the modern Yiddish civilization, serving as a historical overview of the major developments, figures, and movements in modern Yiddish culture, especially from the early 19th century to the present. The course contents include readings (in English translation) of modern Yiddish thought, literature, and cinema.

Course Format, Requirements, and Attendance Policy

This class is structured as a lecture which requires attendance and preparation. Students are expected to read ALL the assigned materials in advance of class. Attendance in lecture is

required and constitutes 10% of your final grade. I will take attendance each time and any student who misses THREE or more lectures/movies throughout the semester will get an “E” grade (for those 10% of the final grade). Any student who misses **25% or more** of the course’s total number of lectures (movies included) will FAIL the class. If extenuating circumstances such as illness force a student to miss one or more classes, the student remains responsible for the material covered during her/his absence. A physician’s note is required in such a case. Tardiness is disruptive to the class and unacceptable. If a student is tardy (arriving more than TWO minutes after the beginning of class) TWICE, it will constitute one unexcused absence. The same goes for leaving class before it ends.

In keeping with University policy I will provide reasonable accommodation of any student’s religious beliefs with regard to the scheduling of examinations and other academic requirements for this course. Please consult me at least two weeks in advance about any such scheduling issues.

Final Grade Breakdown:

Attendance – 10%

Two pop quizzes (at least) – 15% (combined)

Midterm exam: 25%

Term paper – 20%

Final exam: 30%.

Please note: late papers will lose 10 points for every day late.

92% and above.....	A
82-91.99%.....	B
72-81.99%.....	C
61-71.99%.....	D
Below 61%.....	E

Standards of Student Conduct

The use of computers in class is STRICTLY FORBIDDEN. The ONLY exception would be students who can provide a formal authorization from the Disability Resources Center (DRC). The use of texting, cell phones and pagers is also strictly forbidden. Students violating these rules will be asked to leave the class for the day, and will have an absence recorded for that date.

Plagiarism and other forms academic misconduct are strictly forbidden according to the Student Code of Academic Integrity. Students may not plagiarize or represent the work of others as their own, nor modify academic work. Plagiarism is defined as using the ideas and words of others without indicating whose ideas and whose words they are. Do not plagiarize, even inadvertently. If you quote as few as three words, use quotation marks and provide the reference. If you use someone's ideas but not their actual words, provide the reference but do not use quotation marks. For the UA Code on Academic integrity see: <http://deanofstudents.arizona.edu/codeofacademicintegrity>. For further information on how to avoid plagiarism see <http://www.library.arizona.edu/help/tutorials/plagiarism/index.html>

Behavior that could be considered threatening is strictly forbidden according to UA policy (see policy.web.arizona.edu/~policy/threaten.shtml).

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The information contained in the course syllabus, other than the grading policy, may be subject to change with reasonable advance notice as deemed appropriate by the professor.

Required books:

David E. Fishman, The Rise of Modern Yiddish Culture

Joachim Neugroschel (ed.), No Star Too Beautiful: Yiddish Stories from 1382 to the Present

The assigned books are available for purchase at the campus bookstore. The other readings are posted online on D2L.

Primary or literary sources (online)

* Scholarly sources (online)

Lectures and Reading

Week 1 (Jan. 11): Introduction – What Is Yiddish? Origins, Geography, and Dialects

* Max Weinreich, History of the Yiddish Language, 1-5, 175-181

Week 2 (Jan. 18): The Emergence of Hasidic Yiddish Culture in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Century

Class is cancelled on Jan. 16 (Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday)

Dov Ber ben Shmuel of Linets, From “In Praise of the Baal-Shem-Tov” (1815), Neugroschel (ed.), No Star Too Beautiful, 101-104

Rabbi Nakhman of Braslev, “A Tale of a King’s Son Who Was Switched at Birth”, Neugroschel (ed.), No Star Too Beautiful, 121-137

Menahem-Mendel of Kotsk, “I am not a God”, Lucy S. Dawidowicz (ed.), The Golden Tradition, 100-102

Week 3 (Jan. 23-25): The Haskalah (Jewish Enlightenment) Movement

Fishman, The Rise of Modern Yiddish Culture, vi-x, 3-15, 18-32

Yoysef Perl, Selections from *The Revealer of Secrets*, Neugroschel (ed.), No Star Too Beautiful, 142-153

Yitsik-Yoyl Linyetsky, *The Hasidic Boy*, Neugroschel (ed.), No Star Too Beautiful, 175-189

Mordkhe Spector, from *The Jewish Muzhik*, Neugroschel (ed.), No Star Too Beautiful, 238-250

Mendele Moykher Sforim, Fishke the Lame (translated by Gerald Stillman), 17-88

Isaac Dov Levinsohn, “Yiddish Is a Corrupt Jargon”, Paul Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz (eds.), The Jew in the Modern World, 380

Week 4 (Jan. 30-Feb. 1): The Grandfather of Modern Yiddish Literature – Mendele Moykher Sforim (Sholem Yankev Abramovitch)

[The movie *Fishke der Krumer* will be shown in class on Feb. 1, location TBA]

Mendele Moykher Sforim, Fishke the Lame, 89-216

* Gershon Shaked, "'A Groan from a Broken Heart': Mendele's *Fishke the Lame* as a Demand for Responsibility", 194-215

Week 5 (Feb. 6-8): The Classic Writers – Sholem Aleichem (Sholem N. Rabinovitch) and Yitsik Leybush Peretz

Yitsik Leybush Peretz, "On the Stagecoach", Neugroschel (ed.), No Star Too Beautiful, 273-286

Peretz, "Bontshe Shvayg", Ruth R. Wisse (ed.), I. L. Peretz Reader, 146-152

Sholem Aleichem, "The Town of Little People" and "The Clock that Struck Thirteen", Selected Stories, 28-34, 89-96

* David Roskies, "Sholem Aleichem, Mythologist of the Mundane" AJS Review 13 (1988): 27-46

Week 6 (Feb. 13-15): Politics and Language – Nationalism and Socialism

Fishman, The Rise of Modern Yiddish Culture, 48-79

Simon Dubnov, "From Jargon to Yiddish", Joseph Leftwich (ed.), Great Yiddish Writers of the Twentieth Century, 519-527

The Bund, "Decisions on the Nationality Question" (1899, 1901, 1905, 1910), Mendes-Flohr and Reinhartz (eds.), The Jew in the Modern World, 339-343

Abraham Liessin, "When Yiddish Literature Became Socialist", Dawidowicz (ed.), The Golden Tradition, 422-426

* Chaver []

Week 7 (Feb. 20-22): Language Disputes – Hebraists vs. Yiddishists

(In-class midterm exam: Wednesday, Feb. 22)

Fishman, The Rise of Modern Yiddish Culture, 15-17, 83-113

“Czernowitz Conference of the Yiddish Language”, Mendes-Flohr and Reinhartz (eds.), The Jew in the Modern World, 404-405

Nathan Birnbaum, “Contra Zionism”, Mendes-Flohr and Reinhartz (eds.), The Jew in the Modern World, 648-650

Chaim Zhitlowsky, “What Is Jewish Secular Culture?”, Joseph Leftwich (ed.), Great Yiddish Writers of the Twentieth Century, 91-99

Ahad Ha-am, excerpt from “The Spiritual Revival”, Selected Essays, 279-285

Week 8 (Feb. 27-29): In the New World – a Mega-Shtetl on the Hudson?

[The movie *Uncle Moses* will be shown in class on Feb. 29, location TBA]

Leon Kobrin, “Apartment No. Four”, Neugroschel (ed.), No Star Too Beautiful, 534-540

Avrom Reyzen, “The Jew Who Destroyed the Temple”, Neugroschel (ed.), No Star Too Beautiful, 563-566

Sholem Aleichem, Motl the Cantor’s Son, 264-268

Yehoash, “Lynching”, Jules Chametzky (ed.), Jewish American Literature, 142

Week 9 (March 5-7): Yiddish Theater and Yiddish Press

[Dr. Nancy Sinkoff will give her lecture, “Arch Rivals in ‘The Archers’ Voice’: Revisiting the Origins of the Hebrew-Yiddish Language War among East European *Maskilim*”, on March 5, location TBA]

A collection of letters from “A Bintl Briv” (a bundle of letters), Chametzky (ed.), Jewish American Literature, 298-308

* Irving Howe, World of Our Fathers, 518-554

* Joel Berkowitz, “This Is Not Europe, You Know: The Counter-Maskilic Impulse of American Yiddish Drama”, Edward S. Shapiro (ed.), Yiddish in America, 135-165

Week 10 (March 10-18): Spring Recess

Week 11 (March 19-21): Yiddish and the Jewish Labor Movement in America

[The movie *The Forward: From Immigrants to Americans* will be shown in class on March 21, location TBA]

Morris Rosenfeld, “The Sweatshop”, Irving Howe, Ruth R. Wisse, and Khone Shmeruk (eds.), The Penguin Book of Modern Yiddish Verse, 84

“The Beginnings of Secular Jewish Schools”, Mendes-Flohr and Reinhartz (eds.), The Jew in the Modern World, 502-504

* Isaiah Trunk, “The Cultural Dimension of the American Jewish Labor Movement” YIVO Annual 16 (1976): 342-393

Week 12 (March 26-28): The Soviet Experience – The Ramifications of Stalinism

(Term Paper is due on Monday, March 26)

Moyshe Kulbak, “Zelmenyaners”, Neugroschel (ed.), No Star Too Beautiful, 607-620

Samuel Gordon, “A Soviet Shtetl”, Joseph Leftwich (ed.), Great Yiddish Writers of the Twentieth Century, 813-818

Leyb Kvitko, “Russian Death”, Howe, Wisse, and Shmeruk (eds.), The Penguin Book of Modern Yiddish Verse, 298

Perets Markish, “Hey, Women, Spotted with Typhus...”, Howe, Wisse, and Shmeruk (eds.), The Penguin Book of Modern Yiddish Verse, 348-350

Itsik Fefer, “So what if I’ve been circumcised”, Howe, Wisse, and Shmeruk (eds.), The Penguin Book of Modern Yiddish Verse, 546-548

* Judah L. Graubart, “The Night of the Murdered Poets”, Joshua A. Fishman (ed.), Never Say Die! A Thousand Years of Yiddish in Jewish Life and Letters, 485-493

Week 13 (April 2-4): Khurbm (Holocaust)

[The movie *Partisans of Vilna* will be shown in class on April 4, location TBA]

Fishman, The Rise of Modern Yiddish Culture, 139-153

Rokhl Korn, "The End of the Road", Neugroschel (ed.), No Star Too Beautiful, 633-641

Mordecai Gebirtig, "Aflame!", Aaron Kramer and Saul Lishinsky (eds.), The Last Lullaby: Poetry from the Holocaust, 102-104

Jacob Glatstein, "Good Night, World", Chametzky (ed.), Jewish American Literature, 373-374; and Glatstein, "Smoke", Kramer and Lishinsky (eds.), The Last Lullaby, 210

Kadya Molodowsky, "Merciful God", Kramer and Lishinsky (eds.), The Last Lullaby, 208-209

Avrom Sutzkever, "Frozen Jews", Howe, Wisse, and Shmeruk (eds.), The Penguin Book of Modern Yiddish Verse, 680

Week 14 (April 9-11): Postwar American Yiddish Culture

Fishman, The Rise of Modern Yiddish Culture, 126-137

Isaac Bashevis Singer, "The Mirror", Neugroschel (ed.), No Star Too Beautiful, 671-679

Cynthia Ozick, "Envy, Or Yiddish in America", Chametzky (ed.), Jewish American Literature, 858-896

H. Leyvik, "To America", Chametzky (ed.), Jewish American Literature, 287-289

Week 15 (April 16-18): Yiddish in Ultra-Orthodox Communities

Excerpt from Rabbi Jeremiah Israel Isaac Domb, The Transformation: The Case of the Neturei Karta, 98-103

* Solomon Poll, "The Role of **Yiddish** in American Ultra-Orthodox and Hassidic Communities," YIVO Annual of Jewish Social Science 13 (1965): 125-152

Weeks 16-17 (April 23-May 2): An End Or a Renaissance?

[The movie *A Gesheft* will be shown in class on April 23, location TBA]

* Simon J. Bronner, "From *landsmanshaften* to *vinkln*: Mediating Community among Yiddish Speakers in America", Jewish History 15 (2001): 131-148

* Jeffrey Shandler, Adventures in Yiddishland: Postvernacular Language and Culture, 155-176

* Jon G. Auerbach, "They Can't Spell It, Can't Pronounce It and Don't Get It --- So Why Does Every Tom, Dick and Herschel Use Yiddish?" Wall Street Journal, June 2, 1998

Final Exam: Wednesday, May 9, 2012 @ 3:30PM

No early or late exams will be permitted.