

Jewish Storytelling: America to Australia, India to Israel - Jewish Short Stories from Around the World

Prof. Rachel S. Harris

SPRING 2014 • M/W 12.00-1.20pm • Room FLB G36

Credit: 3 hours.

ENGL 223, CWL 221, RLST 220, and YDSH 220.

This course satisfies the Literature and the Arts, and the Western Comparative Culture Requirements.

Office Hours: Monday 2-3 pm or by appointment.

Phone:

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The Jewish Diaspora is a story of migration, exile and settlement – and Jews have moved not just through Europe, Israel and America, but further afield, taking advantage of safe havens, new worlds and economic opportunities. This course will look at the Shtetl and the Jewish world of Eastern Europe, and the migration of European Jews to Canada, North America, South America, Australia and South Africa. But there are older communities of Jews who can trace their heritage back 2,500 years to Baghdad and India, through North Africa and to China. In more recent years the struggle for a national homeland in Palestine and the revitalisation of Hebrew literature has created a strong and powerful literary scene in Israel. This course will explore these many different voices from around the globe.

This year Israeli writer Nava Semel will visit!

Course Goals:

This discussion based course examines a selection of Jewish short stories. Through these narratives this course explores the ways in which themes of identity, alienation, cosmopolitanism, assimilation and travel preoccupy Jewish literature in different locations throughout the modern age.

All texts are available in English.

Required Texts:

The course reader is available at Notes-n-Quotes (502 East John Street)

Course Requirements:

Students are expected to attend and participate in all class meetings. Attendance will be taken periodically. Without proper notification and documentation ahead of time when feasible, failure to attend more than two class meetings will result in your final grade being lowered by one full letter grade.

There will be no quizzes, but all material is to have been prepared beforehand, class participation is a requirement! Each week one student (or a small group) will prepare a brief presentation

about the relevant theme, location or specific text, to be prearranged. Students will write two short and three longer papers. The topics can be found in the course reader.

FOR ESSAY DEADLINES SEE: CLASS TIMETABLE

Essays must be handed in at the start of a class or on days where there is no class essays must be handed in to my mailbox in Comparative Literature.

Essays:

Choose one question to answer and discuss in reference to at least one literary prose text studied in class or at least two poems.

Grades

Short assignments are worth 5% each.

The first essay (4 pages) is worth 20%

The second essay (4 pages) is worth 20%,

The final essay (5-7 pages) is worth 30%.

20% of your final grade is class participation and attendance

If the first two papers are late they will be marked down 10%; the latest they may be turned in is one week after the due date. The final paper must be turned in on time or will not be accepted.

Papers must be delivered by hand: emailed or faxed papers will not be accepted.

A list of questions will be provided for the essays alternatively, students may suggest a substitute title which must be approved in advance with me. A comprehensive guide to essay writing and presentation can be found in the course reader.

Essay Questions

1. How is the shtetl depicted, is it a place of refuge or a prison?
2. Consider the role of family in one of the texts we have examined and explore its representation?
3. How does the representation of father/son relationships shape Jewish fiction?
4. Do Jewish rites of passage unite Jewish fiction, consider in relation to at least 2 different stories?
5. In what ways does location affect Jewish fiction?
6. Choose one major theme and discuss the ways in which it affects the creation of Jewish identity in a specific location? These themes can include, migration, assimilation or cosmopolitanism.
7. What role does language play? Consider both original linguistic choices, and other languages mentioned or included within the text?
8. "Jews are the same everywhere" To what extent do you agree with this statement?
9. Is there a particular characteristic that unites Jewish women in the texts explored in this course?

10. Consider the depiction of Jewish festivals and show how they illustrate similarities and differences between international Jewish communities? (You may concentrate on a single festival or on the Sabbath.)

Other information:

Respect and tolerance for all viewpoints as well as courteous and attentive behaviour are expected from all class participants. Anyone who fails to adhere to these standards may be required to leave the class at my discretion.

Support: If you are having any difficulties in the course, I encourage you to contact me sooner rather than later so that we can devise a work plan and strategies so that you can be successful in the course.

Grading: I strive to be fair and accurate in grading student assignments. If you are dissatisfied with a grade that you have received, please present to me in writing what error you feel has been made and what course of action you propose for remedying it. Then, please visit my office during regular office hours (or contact me to make an appointment) and we will discuss your concerns. Additionally, if you wish to have your final essay returned, please contact me during the first week of the new semester to arrange for the work to be returned to you. It is my policy not to leave student work in public places for pick up. I do not give out or discuss grades over email.

Percentage % Grading Bands

96-100	A+	Excellent knowledge of subject. Critical awareness of academic debate with excellent use of evidence to illustrate argument. Appropriate contextualization of material.
91-95	A	
86-90	A-	
81-85	B+	Good knowledge of subject. Clear awareness of debate, with appropriate use of evidence. Some awareness of larger historical context. Accurate use of appropriate terms.
76-80	B	
71-75	B-	
66-70	C+	Displays factual knowledge of subject. Some evidence of discussion and awareness of different points of view. Adequate documentation. Some use of appropriate terms
61-65	C	
56-60	C-	
51-55	D+	Poor knowledge of subject. Poor presentation of work.
46-50	D	Limited, incorrect or no use of appropriate terms.
41-45	D-	Minimal discussion.
40 or below	FAIL	Work below minimum standard required.

Additional Reading

Fiction:

General:

- Berkman, Marsha Lee, and Elaine Marcus Starkman. Here I Am: Contemporary Jewish Stories from Around the World. Jewish Publications Society, 1998.
- Solotaroff, Ted, and Nessa Rapoport. The Schocken Book of Contemporary Jewish Fiction. First Thus. Schocken, 1996.
- Stavans, Ilan. The Oxford Book of Jewish Stories. Oxford University Press, USA, 1998.
- Zakrzewski, Paul. Lost Tribe: Jewish Fiction from the Edge. Harper Paperbacks, 2003.

Eastern Europe

- Frieden, Ken. Classic Yiddish Fiction: Abramovitsh, Sholem Aleichem, and Peretz. State University of New York Press, 1995.
- Shrayer, Maxim D. An Anthology of Jewish-Russian Literature: Two-Centuries of Dual Identity in Prose And Poetry, Two-Volume Set. M.E. Sharpe, 2007.

Israel

- Aharon Appelfeld; David Grossman; Ruth Almog; Yaakov Shabtai; Yehudit Hendel; Benjamin Tammuz; Dalya Bilu. Six Israeli Novellas. David R Godine, 2001.
- Alcalay, Ammiel. Keys to the Garden: New Israeli Writing. City Lights Publishers, 1996.
- Blocker, Joel. Israeli Stories: A Selection of the Best Contemporary Hebrew Writing. Schocken, 1965
- Carmi, Ted. The Penguin Book of Hebrew Verse. Penguin Classics, 2006.
- Diamant, Carol and Lily Rattok, editors. Ribcage. Israeli Women's Fiction. A Hadassah Anthology. [New York, Women's Zionist Organization of America, 1994.
- Glazer, Miriyam. Dreaming the Actual: Contemporary Fiction and Poetry by Israeli Women Writers. State University of New York Press, 2000.
- Lelchuk, Alan, and Gershon Shaked. 8 Great Hebrew Short Novels. 2nd ed. Toby Press, 2005.

Turkey

- Farhi, Moris. Young Turk: A Novel. Arcade Publishing, 2005.

Iraq

- Mustafa, Shakir. Contemporary Iraqi Fiction: An Anthology. Syracuse University Press, 2008.

South America

- Agosín, Marjorie. The House of Memory: Stories by Jewish Women Writers of Latin America. The Feminist Press at CUNY, 1999.

North America

- Antler, Joyce. America and I: Short Stories by American Jewish Women Writers. Beacon Press, 1991.

India

- David, Esther. Book of Rachel. Penguin Global, 2007.

---. Shalom India Housing Society. The Feminist Press at CUNY, 2009.
Judah, Sophie. *Dropped from Heaven: Stories*. Schocken, 2007.

China

Eber, Irene, and Irene Eber. *Voices from Shanghai: Jewish Exiles in Wartime China*. University Of Chicago Press, 2008.

Australia

Edelson, Phyllis F. *Australian Literature: An Anthology of Writing from the Land Down Under*. 1st ed. Ballantine Books, 1993.
Kalechofsky, Roberta. *Jewish Writing from Down Under: Australia and New Zealand*. Micah Pubns, 1984.

Critical Studies:

General

Encyclopaedia Judaica (available in paper and online in the main library reference room)
Abramson, Glenda. *Encyclopedia of Modern Jewish Culture*. New Ed. Routledge, 2005.
Rosenfeld, Alvin H. *The Writer Uprooted: Contemporary Jewish Exile Literature*. Indiana University Press, 2008.

Eastern Europe

Hadda, Janet. *Passionate Women, Passive Men*. State University of New York Press, 1988.
Hetenyi, Zsuzsa. In *a Maelstrom: A History of Russian-Jewish Prose, 1860–1940*. Central European University Press, 2008.
Miron, Dan. *The Image of the Shtetl and Other Studies of Modern Jewish Literary Imagination*. Syracuse University Press, 2001.
Prokop-Janiec, Eugenia. *Polish Jewish Literature in the Interwar Years*. Annotated edition. Syracuse University Press, 2003.

Western Europe

Fox, Paul. *Decadences: Morality and Aesthetics in British Literature*. BookSurge Publishing, 2007.
Liska, Vivian, and Thomas Nolden. *Contemporary Jewish Writing in Europe: A Guide*. Indiana University Press, 2007.
Sauerberg, Lars Ole. *Intercultural Voices in Contemporary British Literature: The Implosion of Empire*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2002.
Stähler, Axel. *Anglophone Jewish Literatures*. 1st ed. Routledge, 2007.
Tylee, Claire M. *"In the Open": Jewish Women Writers And British Culture*. 1st ed. University of Delaware Press, 2006.

Israel

Abdel-Malek, Kamal, and David C. Jacobson. *Israeli and Palestinian Identities in History and Literature*. St. Martin's Press New York, 1999.
Alter, Robert. *Modern Hebrew Literature*. Behrman House, 1975..
Budick, Emily Miller. *Ideology and Jewish Identity in Israeli and American Literature*. State University of New York Press, 2001.

- Domb, Risa. *Identity and Modern Israeli Literature*. Mitchell Valentine & Company, 2006.
- Fuchs, Esther. *Israeli Mythogynies: Women in Contemporary Hebrew Fiction*. State University of New York Press, 1987.
- Hasak-Lowy, Todd. *Here and Now: History, Nationalism, and Realism in Modern Hebrew Fiction*. Syracuse University Press, 2008.
- Halkin, Simon. *Modern Hebrew Literature, from the Enlightenment to the Birth of the State of Israel: Trends and Values*. Schocken Books, 1970.
- Shaked, Gershon. *Modern Hebrew Fiction*. The Toby Press, 2008.
- Yudkin, Leon I. *Escape into Siege: A Survey of Israeli Literature Today*. Oxford University Press, USA, 1984.

South America

- Agosin, Marjorie. *Memory, Oblivion, and Jewish Culture in Latin America*. University of Texas Press, 2005.
- Aizenberg, Edna. *Books and Bombs in Buenos Aires: Borges, Gerchunoff, and Argentine Jewish Writing*. Brandeis, 2004.
- Astro, Alan, Ilan Stavans, and Ilan Stavans. *Yiddish South of the Border: An Anthology of Latin American Yiddish Writing*. 1st ed. University of New Mexico Press, 2003.
- Barr, Lois Baer. *Isaac Unbound: Patriarchal Traditions in the Latin American Jewish Novel*. Arizona State University, Center for Latin Am, 1995.
- Behar, Ruth. *An Island Called Home: Returning to Jewish Cuba*. Rutgers University Press, 2009.
- Beller, Jacob. *Jews in Latin America*. Jonathan David Co., Inc, 1969.
- Diantonio, Robert and Glickman, Nora (editors). *Tradition and Innovation: Reflections on Latin American Jewish Writing*. State University of New York Press, Albany, 1993.
- Sheinin, David, and Lois Baer Barr. *The Jewish diaspora in Latin America*, 1996.
- Stavans, Ilan. *The Schocken Book of Modern Sephardic Literature*. Schocken, 2005.
- . *The Scroll and the Cross: 1,000 Years of Jewish-Hispanic Literature*. 1st ed. Routledge, 2002.
- . *Tropical Synagogues: Short Stories by Jewish-Latin American Writers*. Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1997.
- Vieira, Nelson H. *Jewish Voices in Brazilian Literature: A Prophetic Discourse of Alterity*. 1st ed. University Press of Florida, 1996.
- Weisbrot, Robert, and Robert Murciano. *Jews of Argentina: From the Inquisition to Peron*. 1st ed. Jewish Publication Society of America, 1979.

North America

- Budick, Emily Miller. *Ideology and Jewish Identity in Israeli and American Literature*. State University of New York Press, 2001.
- Chametzky, Jules, John Felstiner, Hilene Flanzbaum, and Kathryn Hellerstein. *Jewish American Literature: A Norton Anthology*. 1st ed. W.W. Norton & Co., 2000.
- Levinson, Julian. *Exiles on Main Street: Jewish American Writers and American Literary Culture*. Indiana University Press, 2008.
- Maul, Kristina. *Society and Communication in Jewish American Short Stories: Isaac Bashevis Singer, Bernard Malamud, Grace Paley, Philip Roth*. VDM Verlag, 2009.
- Wirth-Nesher, Hana, and Michael P. Kramer. *The Cambridge Companion to Jewish American Literature*. Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Course Schedule

Students are required to attend 2 events organized by the Program in Jewish Culture and Society in addition to the class schedule.

Week 1 - What is Jewish Fiction?

Wed 22nd Jan 2014 - Introduction

Week 2 - The Shtetl

Mon 27th Jan 2014 - "The Miracle on the Sea" and "Moses Montefiore"

Wed 29th Jan 2014 - "Tevye Reads the Psalms" and "Two Anti-Semites" **Short Assignment Due**

Week 3 – Eastern Europe

Mon 3rd Feb 2014 – "Missing Pieces" and "Irons and Diamonds"

Wed 5th Feb 2014 – ESSAY WRITING

Week 4 – Central Europe

Mon 10th Feb 2014 "The Silent Woman" **Short Assignment Due**

Wed 12th Feb 2014 ""Arthur Aronymus" and "Seder Night"

Week 5 – Britain

Mon 17th Feb 2014 "Grand Old Ladies" and "The Sabbath Breaker"

Wed 19th Feb 2014 "Playing Ball on Hampstead Heath"

Week 6 – Britain continued

Mon 24th Feb 2014 - "Playing Ball on Hampstead Heath"

Wed 26th Feb 2014 - **First Essay Due**

Week 7 – South Africa and Canada

Mon 3rd Mar 2014 - "The Zulu and the Zeide" and "Why Adonis Laughed"

Wed 5th Mar 2014 - "Lies my Father Told Me" and "The Scribe"

Week 8 – Syrians in the US, India

Mon 10th Mar 2014 - "Atonement" Issues of Identity

Wed 12th Mar 2014 - "Shame Under the Chuppah"

Week 9 – Latin America

Mon 17th Mar 2014 - “May You Make a Good Bride” and “Camacho’s Wedding Feast”

Wed 19th Mar 2014 - “Canillas De Leche”

Week 10 – SPRING BREAK

Mon 24th Mar 2014 – NO CLASS

Wed 26th Mar 2014 – NO CLASS

Week 11 – The USA

Mon 31st Mar 2014- “Conversion of the Jews”

Wed 2nd Apr 2014 - “After all I did for Israel”, – **Second Essay Due**

Week 12 – The USA continued

Mon 7th Apr 2014 – “The Scrolls” and “Prophet’s Dilemma”

Wed 9th Apr 2014 – “So Long”

Week 13 – NO CLASSES

Mon 14th Apr 2014 PASSOVER NO CLASS

Wed 16th Apr 2014 PASSOVER NO CLASS

Week 14 – Israel

Mon 21st Apr 2014 PASSOVER NO CLASS

Wed 23rd Apr 2014 “The Three Halutzot”–

Week 15 – Nava Semel

Mon 28th Apr 2014 – Etgar Keret Selection

Wed 30th Apr 2014 – **A Hat of Glass**

Week 16

Mon 5th May 2014 – **Final Essay Due**

Wed 7th May 2014