

NEAR EASTERN LANGUAGES AND CIVILIZATION

NEAR E /JSIS

Jewish Prayers and Poems

5 credits

2014

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This course examines traditional Jewish prayers side by side with modern poems that draw on those classical sources. Class readings introduce students to Jewish liturgy and include texts by Israeli and American poets who rethink matters of faith, the language of religion, and the role of tradition in contemporary Jewish life. Topics to be covered include: blessings, synagogue prayer services, High Holiday prayers, the Sabbath, prayers of mourning, and debate over gender and prayer.

No prerequisites; no knowledge of Hebrew is required. Any student who wishes to do some of the reading in the original Hebrew/Aramaic and complete additional written work on a topic related to this course may discuss the possibility of registering with the instructor for 1 or 2 credits of independent study (MHEB 490).

REQUIREMENTS

Required readings:

Coursepack + Course reserves at OUGL

David Jacobson, *Creator, Are You Listening?*

Students are expected to complete required readings, attend class regularly, and participate in class discussion. Assignments will include three 5 page essays (750 words each), in-class writing exercises, and quizzes. Final grades will be determined as follows:

Essays	60%
Class participation (including quizzes)	40%

Grading scale:

98-100	=	4.0	
96-97	=	3.9	
94-95	=	3.8	
92-93	=	3.7	
91	=	3.6	
90	=	3.5	
89	=	3.4	
88	=	3.3	etc.

Calendar:

Essays will be due:

Holidays:

Learning objectives:

By the end of the course students are expected 1) to be familiar with important elements of Jewish prayer, including blessings, synagogue prayer services, High Holiday prayers, Sabbath customs, prayers of mourning, psalms, *piyut*, and debates over gender, God language, and religious observance; 2) to read a range of modern poems and to understand how recent writers have re-imagined or re-framed the language of religion as they reflect on matters of faith; 3) to understand basic features of the art of poetry; analysis of texts in this course will equip students to undertake close reading in a range of other contexts

*Attendance and class participation are important to the learning process. However, if you have symptoms of contagious illness – such as sniffles, sneezes, a cough, a sore throat, or a fever – please do not come to class. We will figure out a way to cover the material so that your learning and your grades will not suffer.

*It is understood that some students may miss class for observance of religious holidays, and that they will be able to make up missed work due to such absences.

*If you would like to request academic accommodations due to a disability please contact Disabled Student Services, 448 Schmitz, 206-543-8924 (uwdss@u.washington.edu). If you have a letter from Disabled Student Services indicating you have a disability that requires academic accommodations, please present the letter to the instructor and discuss the accommodations you might need for class.

*Students should keep a copy of each graded assignment. This is very useful if for any reason students have questions about the calculation of grades or if an instructor's records get lost or damaged. Protect yourself and keep your work.

*Cell-phone policy: During class please silence your cell phones and other electronic devices that may make noise or disturb others.

*In cases of academic misconduct, such as plagiarism, copying someone's homework, getting inappropriate help with compositions, or cheating on quizzes or exams, the offending student will be penalized in accordance with the policy of the College of Arts and Sciences.

Unit I (weeks 1+2)

From morning prayers:

Morning blessings, *Shma* (Hear O Israel), *Yigdal*, *13 ikarim* (Thirteen Principles of Faith), from the Torah service, *Eyn keloheinu* (None compares to our God)

Avraham Shlonsky, "Toil"

Esther Raab, "A Woman's Song"

Eliaz Cohen, "Hear O Lord"

Primo Levi, "Shema"

Yehudah Amichai, "Gods Change, Prayers are Here to Stay" #2, #11, #17, #20, #27

Dan Pagis "Testimony"

Marcia Falk, from *The Book of Blessings*

Marge Piercy, "Tree of Life"

Unit II (weeks 3+4)

Memorial prayers and mourning:

El malei rahamim (God full of mercy), *Kadish yatom* (Mourner's Kaddish)

Yehudah Amichai, "God of Mercy" (p. 53-54)

Asher Reich, "Take My Thoughts" (p. 107-108)

Hava Pinhas-Cohen, "A Woman Mourner's Kaddish" (p. 169-170)

Kobi Oz, "Traffic Jam of Miracles"

Allen Ginsburg, "Kaddish"

Marge Piercy, "Kaddish"

Adrienne Rich, "Tattered Kaddish"

Unit III (weeks 5+ 6)

Prayers for the Days of Awe:

Our Father Our King, *Ashamnu*, from *Ne'ilah* (Open the Gate), *Unetaneh tokef*

Yehuda Amichai, "Jerusalem 1967"

Yehudah Amichai, "Our Father Our King" (p. 60), "My Father My King" (p. 70-71)

Asher Reich, “*Ne’ilah*” (p. 112)
Chava Pinhas-Cohen, “Facing the Gates” (p. 153-154)
Leonard Cohen, “Who By Water, Who By Fire”

Unit IV (weeks 7+8)

Psalms 82 and 145 (*Ashrei*), *Piyut*

Yehudah Amichai, “From “Once I Wrote Now and in Other Days” (p. 56-57)

Admiel Kosman, “Psalm of the Day” “*Piyut*” (p. 191)

Asher Reich – “I Don’t Move When I Pray” (p. 180-181)

Unit V (weeks 9+10)

Evening prayers:

Ma’ariv, *Shma*, *Lekha Dodi*, candle lighting and *Kiddush*

Hayim Nahman Bialik, “Sabbath Queen“

Eyal Megged - “Ma’ariv“

Kadya Molodovsky – “Women’s Songs, VIII“

Sarah Bas Tovim, from “The Tkhine of the Gates”

Malka Heifetz Tussman, “Forgotten”

Page numbers refer to the book *Creator, Are You Listening?*

Individual reading assignments are subject to change.

Recommended Secondary Reading

Lawrence Hoffman, ed. *My People’s Prayerbook*,

Lawrence Hoffman, *The Way into Jewish Prayer*

Alan Mintz, “Prayer and the Prayerbook,” in *Back to the Sources*, ed. Barry Holtz

Adin Steinsalz, *Guide to Jewish Prayer*

Hayim Halevy Donin, *To Pray as a Jew*

Reuven Hammer, *Entering the High Holy Days*

I. Elbogen, *Jewish Liturgy*

Jules Harlow, *Pray Tell: A Hadassah Guide to Prayer*

Stanley Burnshaw, et al. *The Modern Hebrew Poem Itself*

Glenda Abramson, *The Writing of Yehuda Amichai*

Anne Lapidus Lerner, “A Woman’s Song: The Poetry of Esther Raab” in *Gender and Text in Modern Hebrew and Yiddish Literature*

Wendy Zierler, “Footprints, Traces, Remnants: The Operations of Memory in Dan Pagis’ ‘Aqebot” *Judaism* 41: 4 (164) (1992 Fall).