

Joan Rappaport
Summer 2009 Session II (online)
RSOC 173
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Modern Jewish Experience

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course uses literature produced by Jews since the 19th century as a means to examine their religious, cultural, and social positions in the modern world. By examining a variety of literary material (some originally in English, but mostly in translation from Hebrew, and Yiddish), the course will familiarize students with major issues of Jewish life in the modern period: the breakdown of communal autonomy, the impact of Enlightenment ideas, the rise of nationalism, modern anti-semitism, the impact of mass migrations and the rise of Jewish life in the Americas, Zionism, the building of the State of Israel and the Arab-Jewish conflict, the destruction of European Jewry, as well as developments in the post-war period.

Required Texts:

Treasury of Yiddish Stories, ed. Irving Howe and Eliezer Greenberg
Modern Hebrew Literature, ed. Robert Alter
American Jewish Fiction, ed. Gerald Shapiro

Course Requirements and Grading:

Class discussion	30%
One 2 page paper	20%
One 4-6 page paper	25%
Final exam	25%

Participation in discussion groups

There will be substantial emphasis on student participation. This will require careful preparation of reading assignments and informed participation in online discussion groups. You will receive detailed instructions for participating in the discussion groups once the course begins.

First paper (2 pages, double-spaced)

This paper is a thought paper in which you will respond critically to a focused question. The paper should not be a summary. You will need to make a precise and original main point that you then proceed to develop, illustrate, or support. The paper will be graded on content and clarity of writing.

Second paper (4-6 pages, double-spaced)

For this paper, you will follow the guidelines for the first paper. However, this paper will compare and contrast two texts.

Final Exam

The final exam is an open-book essay exam, covering all of the works that we have read.

Schedule

Week 1: July 27 – August 2

Course Introduction; Jewish Life and Haskalah in Eastern Europe; and Responses to Anti-Semitism

Reading: In *Treasury of Yiddish Stories*: Mendele, "The Calf" (pp. 97-111); Sholom Aleichem, "On Account of a Hat" (pp. 111-18), Sholom Aleichem, "Dreyfus in Kasrilevke" (pp. 187-192); "The Pair" (pp. 192-205), Peretz, "The Dead Town" (pp. 205-213); "Bontsha the Silent" (pp. 223-230).

Week 2: August 3 – August 9

America and the Jewish Immigrant Experience

Reading: In *American Jewish Fiction*: Abraham Cahan, "A Ghetto Wedding," pp. 1-14; Anzia Yezierska, "How I Found America," pp. 15-37; Paley, "Goodbye and Good Luck" (pp. 142-151).

Week 3: August 10 – August 16

Zionism and Palestine

Reading: In *Modern Hebrew Literature*: Brenner, "The Way Out" (pp. 141-157); Haim Hazaz, "The Sermon" (pp. 267-287).

Week 4: August 17 – August 23

Responses to the Holocaust; Arab-Jewish Conflict--Ambivalence in the Promised Land

Reading: In *Treasury of Yiddish Stories*: Chaim Grade, "My Quarrel with Hersh Rasseynner," *American Jewish Fiction*, Malamud, "The Lady of the Lake" (pp. 94-114). In *Modern Hebrew Literature*, S. Yizhar, "The Prisoner" (pp. 291-310); A. B. Yehoshua "Facing the Forests" (pp. 353-392).

Week 5: August 24 – September 1

Post-War American Jewish Identities

In *American Jewish Fiction*: Olsen, "Tell Me A Riddle" (pp. 51-85); Ozick, "Envy; or, Yiddish in America" (pp. 174-222).