

Religious Studies  
RSOC 27  
Spring 2009  
TTh 9:55-11:40

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Office Hours: TTh 11:45-12:45  
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### **Immigrant Jewish Writers: Voices Old and New**

Description: In this course, we compare the newest young immigrant Jewish writers from Eastern Europe with their classic literary forerunners. We examine themes including assimilation, religious awakening, and responses to the Holocaust (by the post WWII writers). New texts include Gary Shteyngart's *The Russian Debutante's Handbook*, Jonathan Safran Foer's *Everything is Illuminated*, and Lara Vapnyar's *There Are Jews in My House*; older voices include those of Abraham Cahan, Henry Roth, and Anzia Yezierska.

Requirements:

Class participation 10%  
Two student presentations 20% (10% each)  
Weekly 1-2 page papers on assigned questions 25%  
One 8-10 page paper 25%  
Take-home final exam 20%

*Class participation and presentations*

This course places substantial emphasis on student participation. In addition to careful preparation of reading assignments and informed participation in discussion, you will be required to give two five-minute presentations. The presentations should not summarize the material, but explore and respond critically to focused questions, problems, or tensions in the text. Following your five-minute presentation, you will be responsible for raising several questions for class discussion.

*Short weekly papers (1-2 pages)*

You will receive the weekly paper topics each Thursday. Papers may be turned in either on Tuesdays or Thursdays, but must be on the reading discussed that day. Like the presentations, these papers are not summaries, but critical responses to focused questions or issues.

*Long paper (8-10 pages)*

You will receive topics for the longer paper 4 weeks prior to its due date.

*Final Exam*

Take-home exam.

## Schedule

### **1. Chain of Tradition and Rebellion**

Tues. March 31 Course Introduction

Thurs. April 2 Deuteronomy, *Lamentations*, Bialik

### **2. Emancipation in Western Europe and East European Jewry**

Tues. April 7 Emancipation and Haskalah

Thurs. April 9 Mendele Mocher Sforim and Isaac Babel

Tues. April 14 Sholem Aleichem and Peretz

### **3. Early Immigrant Writers**

Thurs. April 16 Abraham Cahan *Yekl*

Tues. April 21 Film: Hester Street

Thurs. April 23 Anzia Yezierska, *Bread Givers*

### **4. Coming of Age in America and the Jewish American Novel**

Tues. April 28 Roth, *Call It Sleep*

Thurs. April 30 Roth, *Call It Sleep*

### **5. New Voices**

Tues. May 5 Gary Shteyngart, *The Russian Debutante's Handbook* \*\*Receive topics for long paper\*\*

Thurs. May 7 Gary Shteyngart, *The Russian Debutante's Handbook*

Tues. May 12 Jonathan Safran Foer, *Everything is Illuminated*

Thurs. May 14 Jonathan Safran Foer, *Everything is Illuminated*

Tues. May 19 Film: *Everything is Illuminated*

Thurs. May 21 Lara Vapnyar, *There Are Jews in My House*

Tues. May 26 Lara Vapnyar, *There Are Jews in My House*

Thurs. May 28 Film: T.B.A.

Tues. June 2 \*\*Long paper is due\*\*

Thurs. June 4 Last Day of Class, Receive take-home final exam