

The University of Toronto

**HOMELESS OR WORLDLY?  
MODERN JEWISH LITERATURE IN EUROPE**

German 361HS / Spring 2012

Instructor:	<b>RACHEL SEELIG</b>	Dept:	German
Office:	Odette Hall #303	Email:	TBD
Hours:	W 11-12 (& by app.)	Tel.:	TBD

Class meets on **M 3-5** at **TF 201**

**DESCRIPTION**

Until the middle of the twentieth century, the Jews had no territory of their own. Did they define their Diaspora experience as a form of exile or as a source of cosmopolitanism? Does the literature they produced reflect the voice of a people without a home or of citizens of the world? In this course we will examine Jewish literature written in several European languages—German, Yiddish, Hebrew and Russian—in the context of political and geographical changes that took place over the course of a century, from the mid-nineteenth through the mid-twentieth century. We will consider how the transition from multiethnic European empires to new nation-states influenced Jewish national identity, as well as the effects of the two world wars and the resulting Jewish immigration to new lands, such as North America and Israel. Sholem Aleichem, I.L. Peretz, Franz Kafka, Arthur Schnitzler, Stefan Zweig, S.Y. Agnon and Abraham Sutzkever are among the authors to be studied. All texts will be read in English translation.

**COURSE GOALS**

This course provides an overview of the multilingual landscape of Jewish literature during a time of intense political and geographical transformation throughout Europe. Students will gain an appreciation for some of the most significant (and some of the most neglected) modern Jewish voices, and learn to distinguish the various strains of Modernism in European letters. The multilingual, transnational approach of the course is intended to expose students to the complexity of Jewish national identity and to challenge literary historiographies rooted in the assumed relationship between nation, language and landscape. To this end, concepts from postcolonial and transnational theory will be introduced and discussed.

**REQUIREMENTS / EVALUATION**

Attendance and participation	40%
Short response paper (2 pages)	10%
Midterm take-home exam	20%
Final paper (8-10 pages)	30%

## MATERIALS

NOTE: The following reading list is provisional and subject to change.

- S.Y. Abramovitch, "Benjamin the Third," *Tales of Mendele the Book Peddler* (Schocken, 1996)  
 S.Y. Agnon, *A Book that was Lost: and Other Stories* (Schocken, 1996)  
 Sholem Aleichem, *Tevye the Dairyman and the Railroad Stories* (Schocken, 1996)  
 Isaac Babel, *Red Calvary* (Norton, 2003)  
 Yosef Hayim Brenner, *Breakdown and Bereavement* (Toby Press, 2003)  
 Robert Friend, ed. *Found in Translation: Modern Hebrew Poets* (Toby Press, 2006)  
 Jacob Glatstein, *The Glatstein Chronicles* (Yale, 2010)  
 Franz Kafka, "Investigations of a Dog"; "Jackals and Arabs"; "Josephine the Singer"  
 Irving Howe, ed. *The Penguin Book of Modern Yiddish Verse* (Penguin, 1988)  
 Dan Miron, *A Traveler Disguised: The Rise of Modern Yiddish Fiction* (Syracuse, 1996)  
 I.L. Peretz, "Bontshe the Silent"; "Kabbalists"; "Monish"  
 Shachar Pinsker, *Literary Passports: The Making of Modernist Hebrew Fiction in Europe* (Stanford, 2010)  
 Stefan Zweig, *The World of Yesterday* (University of Nebraska, 1964)  
 Arthur Schnitzler, *The Road into the Open* (University of California, 1991)  
 Isaac Bashevis Singer, "Gimpel the Fool"; "Yentl"  
 Ruth Wisse, *The Modern Jewish Canon* (University of Chicago, 2003)  
 Ritchie Robertson, *The German-Jewish Dialogue: An Anthology of Literary Texts* (Oxford, 1999)

## CALENDAR

Note: The purpose of this calendar is to provide a general idea of how this course is structured. It may be subject to change. A binding course syllabus will be provided at the first class session.

[Instructor: Please provide a somewhat descriptive title for each week.]

- |         |  |
|---------|--|
| Week 1  | Imagining the Shtetl: The Tales of Mendele the Bookseller                      |
| Week 2  | Beyond the Pale: Sholem Aleichem and I.L. Peretz                               |
| Week 3  | Songs of Zion in a European Key: Modern Hebrew Verse                           |
| Week 4  | By Land and by Sea: Yosef Hayim Brenner and S.Y. Agnon                         |
| Week 5  | Vienna, Capital of the World: Stefan Zweig and Arthur Schnitzler               |
| Week 6  | Red Jews: Isaac Babel and Soviet Jewish Literature                             |
| Week 7  | Strangers in Berlin: Jewish Literature in the Weimar Republic                  |
| Week 8  | East or West? The Tales of Franz Kafka   |
| Week 9  | To Build and be Built: Language, Literature and Politics in the Land of Israel |
| Week 10 | The Golden Land: Jewish Literature in America                                  |
| Week 11 | If I Forget thee, Poland: Isaac Bashevis Singer and Jacob Glatstein            |

Week 12 Paper Bridges: Abraham Sutzkever and Kadya Molodowsky