

Introduction to Yiddish Literature and Culture in Translation, GER 361F

Fall, Thursdays 10-12 p.m Jackman Humanities Hall, 170 St. George Street, room 235

Instructor: Dr. Anna Shternshis

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The course is an overview of the major figures and tendencies in modern Yiddish literature and culture from the beginning of the 19th century to the present, featuring readings (in English) of modern Yiddish prose, poetry, drama and cinema. Students with knowledge of Yiddish are encouraged to read some original texts.

Course requirements:

- Class Participation – 15% of the final grade
- 1 take home paper –35% of the final grade
- 4 short opinion pieces (1-2 pages) for selected readings, posted for the discussion group on blackboard – 25% of the final grade
- Final test – 25% of the final grade

Materials

Required Reading:

The list of books used in the course:

No star too beautiful: Yiddish stories from 1382 to the present 2002. , ed. Joachim Neugroschel. New York: Norton.

*Ashes out of hope: Fiction by soviet-yiddish writers*1977. , eds. Eliezer Greenberg, Irving Howe. New York: Schocken Books.

A treasury of Yiddish stories 1954. , eds. Irving Howe, Eliezer Greenberg. New York: Viking Press.

Levin, Meyer. 1966. *Classic hassidic tales; Marvellous tales of rabbi israel baal shem and of his great-grandson, rabbi nachman, retold from hebrew, yiddish, and german sources. illustrated by marek szwarc.*, ed. Na?man. New York|bCitadel Press|c[1966]: Citadel Press|c[1966].

Linetzki, Isaac Joel. 1975. *The polish lad*. 1st English ed. ed. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America.

Mendele Mokher Sefarim. 1996. *Tales of mendele the book peddler : Fishke the lame and benjamin the third*, eds. Dan Miron, Ken Frieden and Mendele Mokher Sefarim. New York: Schocken Books.

Sholem Aleichem. 1987. *Tevye the dairyman and the railroad stories*, eds. Hillel Halkin, Sholem Aleichem. New York: Schocken Books.

Sutzkever, Abraham. 1981. *Burnt pearls : Ghetto poems*. Oakville, Ont.: Mosaic Press.

You are expected to buy the following books

Tevye the Dairyman and the Railroad Stories (Schocken, 1987) by Sholem Aleichem.

Joachim Neugroschel, *No Star Too Beautiful* (Norton, 2002)

Mendele Moykher Sforim, *Tales of Mendele the Book Peddler: "Fishke the Lame" and "Benjamin the Third"* Schocken, 1996

All of the other required reading is available through the blackboard.

Please go to portal.utoronto.ca, sign in (your utorid is your login, your password is the same one you use to check your UofT email), and follow the instructions. You are automatically enrolled once you sign up for the course. You need to have a utorid in order to use it. Announcements about the course, additional course materials, and changes will be posted through the blackboard.

Calendar

September 16

Emergence of the Yiddish Language. Old Yiddish Literature.

Eli Bokhur: Bovo of Altona, Chapters 1-3, in Neugroschel, *No star too beautiful: Yiddish stories from 1382 to the present*. pp. 19 - 28

Anonymous: Stories about the Tsadiks, in Neugroschel, pp. 104 – 113.

Jan 16

Nakhman Bratslav Stories and the Beginning of Modern Yiddish Storytelling

Meyer Levin, *Classic Chassidic Tales* pp., 192 – 198, 198 – 212, 257 – 289, 333 – 357.

September 23

Jewish Enlightenment in Yiddish Literature

Linetzki, Isaac Joel, *The Polish Lad*. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1975

September 30

The Grandfather of Modern Yiddish Literature: Sholem Yankev Abramovitch

Abramovitch, “Fishke the Lame”

October 7

The Jewish Don Quixote

S. Y. Abramovich, *Travels of Benjamin the Third*

Abramovitch, “Travels of Benjamin the Third”

October 14

The Father of Modern Jewish Literature: Sholem Aleichem

Sholem Aleichem, “Tevye the Dairyman”

October 21

Sholem Aleichem, *Railroad Stories*

October 28

The Prophet of Modern Yiddish Storytelling: Yitskhok Leybush Peretz

Required reading: Y. L. Perets, “Bontsa the Silent,” “If not Higher,” “The Golem,” “The Mad Talmudist,” “Devotion without the End,” in *Treasury of Yiddish Stories*, pp. 118 – 150, 223 – 242

‘Kaballists,’ in Neugroschel, pp. 286 - 290

November 4

Negotiating Judaism, Christianity and the American Experience: Sholem Ash and Lamed Shapiro

Required Reading: Sholem Ash, "Kola Street," pp. 260 - 274

Sholem Ash, "The Story of Beautiful Marie" in Neugroschel, pp. 546 – 552

Lamed Shapiro, "The Cross," in Neugroschel, pp. 402 - 415

November 11

Modernism in Yiddish Literature: Der Nister and David Bergelson

Bergelson, "The Deaf Man," in Neugroschel, pp. 424-442

Der Nister, "Under a Fence: A Revue" in *Ashes out of Hope*

November 19

Sex and Demons in Yiddish Literature: Isaac Bashevis Zinger

Isaak Bashevis Zinger, "The Mirror," in Neugroschel, pp. 671 – 678

"Gimpl the Fool," and "Little Shoemakers," in *Treasure of Yiddish Stories*, pp. 401 – 413, 523 - 543

November 25

Describing the Indescribable: Yiddish Literature during the Holocaust

Sutskever, "Ghetto Poems"

December 2

Post-Holocaust Yiddish Literature

Chava Rosenfarb, "Bociany," Chapter 1, in Neugroschel, pp. 692 – 710

Rokhl Korn, "The End of the Road," in Neugroschel, pp. 633 - 640

April 9

Final Examination

We will discuss subjects for papers during our classes. Feel free to suggest your own topics. Papers can be e-mailed, mailed or dropped off in-person. There is a penalty for papers that are submitted late (1.5% per each day) without a doctor's note. Ten days after the deadline, papers will not be accepted.

Class participation includes attendance, familiarity with the required reading, and active participation in discussion.

Possible Subjects for Take-Home Essays:

1. Analyze Reb Nakhman's tale 'Seven beggars'. What is the symbolism of the story? How did Nakhman hope to "awaken" his listeners from moral sleep? Compare this story with 'Rabbi and his Son'.
2. Discuss issues of love and marriage in 'Fishke the Lame' and 'Travels of Benjamin III'.
3. Both, reb Nakhman and Abramovich often have physically disabled characters in their work. What role do these disabilities play in political and moral agendas of both authors? What are the differences and similarities in approaches of both authors? Cite examples.
4. Discuss the role of Mendele Moykher Sforim as a character in 'Fishke the Lame' and 'Benjamin the Third'.
5. How did Abramovich and Reb Nakhman understand the issue of women's liberation? Discuss similarities and differences.
6. Jewish geography and its symbolism in 'Gimpl the Fool', and 'Fishke the Lame'.

It is required that you discuss this topic in advance. No matter what subject you choose, you must have a research question, which you will present at the beginning of your paper.

Your paper should justify the choice of this question, suggest a hypothesis and then prove it, providing the significance of your findings in its conclusions.

You must use at least five sources for your paper, and at least three of them have to come from referred journals. Wikipedia articles do not count as refereed publications.

Papers should be typed with 12pt font, double-spaced.