

Soviet and Kosher: Jewish Culture in the Soviet Union GER 362S

Fridays 10 a.m. - Noon, Jackman Humanities Hall, rm. 235

Instructor: Professor Anna Shternshis

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Office hours Fridays: 3-4 p.m.

Address: Jackman Humanities Hall, room 230F, 170 St. George Street,

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Syllabus

Friday, January 8, 2009

Introduction: Russian Jewry on the Eve of the Russian Revolution

Required:

Zvi Gitelman, *Century of Ambivalence*, pp. 1 – 58

Recommended:

Benjamin Nathans, *Beyond the Pale*, excerpts

Pauline Wengeroff, *Rememberings. The World of a Russian Jewish Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (University of Maryland Press, 2001), selected parts

Lucy Dawidowicz, *The Golden Tradition: Jewish Life and Thought in Eastern Europe*, pp. 405 – 422

Friday, January 15

From the Pale of Settlement to the Collective Farm:

Key events of Soviet Jewish history in 1917 – 1941

Required:

Zvi Gitelman *Century of Ambivalence*, pp. 59 - 87

Jonathan Dekel Chen, *Farming the Red Land: Jewish Agricultural Colonization and Local Soviet Power, 1924-1941*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005, chapter 2.

Etya G. story, sovietjewishculture.org

Recommended:

Leon Dennen, *Where the Ghetto Ends - Jews in Soviet Russia*. Ny: Alfred H. King, 1934, pp. 61 – 99

Friday, January 22

Organization of the Jewish Education System and Yiddish Schools, 1918 - 1939

Required:

David Fishman, *Judaism in the USSR, 1917 – 1930. Fate of Jewish Education*, in Yaakov Roi, *Jews and Jewish Life in Russia and the Soviet Union*, pp. 251 - 262

Elias Shulman, *Yiddish schools*, pp. 35 - 162

Gitelman, *Century of Ambivalence*, pp. 88 – 114

Grigorii story, sovietjewishculture.org

Recommended:

Estraikh, *Soviet Yiddish, Language, Planning and Linguistic Development*, pp. 115 – 140

Gilboa, *A Language Silenced*, pp. 47 - 124

Friday, January 29

Is Passover a Revolutionary Holiday?

Anti-Religious Propaganda in the Soviet Union

Required:

Anna Shternshis, *Soviet and Kosher*, chapter 1

Elissa Bemporad, *Behavior Unbecoming a Communist: Jewish Religious Practice in Soviet Minsk* □ Jewish Social Studies - Volume 14, Number 2, Winter 2008 (New Series), pp. 1-31

Red Hagaddah by Moshe Altshuler

Friday, February 5

Yiddish Culture during the interwar period: press and theater

Required:

Gennady Estraikh, pp. 62 - 97

Anna Shternshis, 'From the Eradication of Illiteracy to Workers' Correspondents: Yiddish Language Mass Movements in the Soviet Union', *East European Jewish Affairs*, Vol. 32, 2002.

Benjamin Harshav, *The Moscow State Yiddish Theater*, exerts

Dennen, pp. 32 – 49, 108 – 110, 130 – 141

Recommended:

Jeffrey Veidlinger, *Moscow State Yiddish theater*

Friday, February 12

Soviet Yiddish Literature: Dovid Bergelson, Moyshe Kulbak, and Itsik Fefer

Required:

Itsik Fefer, selected poems

Moyshe Kulbak, *Zelmenyaner*

David Bergelson, *The Hole Through Which Life Slips*

Recommended:

Chonya Chmeruk 'Yiddish Literature in the Soviet Union,' in Lionel Kochan, *The Jews in Soviet Russia Since 1917*, pp. 232 - 268

Dennen, pp. 141 – 160

Friday, February 19

Soviet Jewish Cinema

Reading Week – No Classes

Required viewing:

Jewish Luck, 1925
Seekers of Happiness, 1938

Friday, February 26

Yiddish-Soviet Folk Songs as a Medium of Propaganda and Folk Self-Expression

Required:

Selected Yiddish songs (with English translation)
Jeffrey Veidlinger, 'Klezmer and the Kremlin: Soviet Yiddish Folk Songs of the 1930s,' *East European Jewish Affairs* 1 (2000), pp. 5 – 40.
Sofiya story, sovietjewishculture.org

Recommended

Jeffrey Wollock, 'The Soviet Klezmer Orchestra', *East European Jewish Affairs*, 2 (2000), pp. 1 – 32.
Anna Shternshis, 'May Day, Tractor and Piglets: Yiddish Songs for Little Communists'

Friday, March 5

The Stories of Isaak Babel as a Window into Soviet Russian Language Jewish Culture

Required:

Isaac Babel, *Red Cavalry*
Isaac Babel, *Odessa Stories*

Friday, March 12

Black Years of Soviet Jewish History: *Destruction of the Soviet Jewry during World War II and the Immediate Aftermath*

Required Reading: Vasily Grossman, *Black Book*, excerpts

Rubenstein Joshua and Vladimir P. Naumov. *Stalin's secret pogrom: the postwar inquisition of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee*; translated by Laura Esther Wolfson.
New Haven [Conn.] : Yale University Press, c2001. pp. 117 – 142, 158 -167.
Gitelman, *Century of Ambivalence*, pp. 115 - 143

Recommended:

interview with the Soviet Holocaust survivor

Friday, March 19

The Gray Years of Soviet Jewish History – 1953 – 1991

Required Reading:

Gitelman, *Century of Ambivalence*, pp. 144 – 195
Esther Markish, *Memoirs*

Friday, March 26

Jewish Culture on the Margins

Required Reading:

Vassily Grossman, *Life and Fate*, exerts
Likvidatsiya, film series, episode 6
Jokes and Anecdotes about Soviet Jewish Life

Grading system:

Class participation – 10 %
Four short papers (1-2 pages) (40%) (due throughout semester, details will be discussed)
Independent project (7 – 8pages) (25%) (Due March 19)
Final test (take-home) – 25 %

There is a penalty for the papers that are submitted late without a doctor's note (1.5% per each day).

Some of you may be asked to present the results of your independent projects for the rest of the students.

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

You are expected to buy the following book (which is already available in Vic bookstore):

Zvi Gitelman, *Century of Ambivalence* (Indiana University Press, 2002)

In addition, a course reader has been prepared. It will be accessible through the course website via blackboard.