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:


*You are expected to buy the following books*

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


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.*


**Jan 16**

*Nakhman Bratslav Stories and the Beginning of Modern Yiddish Storytelling*

**September 23**

**Jewish Enlightenment in Yiddish Literature**


**September 30**

**The Grandfather of Modern Yiddish Literature: Sholem Yankev Abramovitch**

Abramovitsh, “Fishke the Lame”

**October 7**

**The Jewish Don Quixote**

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

Abramovitsh, “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 Leybusch Peretz**


‘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

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**


“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.