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
anna.shternshis@utoronto.ca
Office hours Fridays: 3-4 p.m.
Address: Jackman Humanities Hall, room 230F, 170 St.George Street,
Tel. 416 946 3210

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, exerts
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
Etya G. story, sovietjewishculture.org
Recommended:

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:**
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
Red Hagaddah by Moshe Altshuler

**Friday, February 5**
**Yiddish Culture during the interwar period: press and theater**

**Required:**
Gennady Estraikh, pp. 62 - 97
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:**
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,
Sofiya story, sovietjewishculture.org

Recommended
Jeffrey Wollock, ‘The Soviet Klezmer Orchestra’, East European Jewish Affairs, 2
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
Isaak 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, exerts
Rubenstein Joshua and Vladimir P. Naumov. Stalin's secret pogrom: the postwar inquisition of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee; translated by Laura Esther Wolfson.
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 – 8 pages) (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.