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GER 260Y Elementary Yiddish
Dept. of Germanic Languages and Literatures
Fall 2023
Monday, Wednesday, Friday, 12:00-1:00 pm
AH (Alumni Hall) 103
121 St. Joseph Street

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Instructor: Miriam Borden
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Office hours: By appointment

Description and Course Goals

Vos hert zikh? Welcome to Elementary Yiddish! This course will be an introduction to the Yiddish language and culture of Ashkenazic Jews. Students will begin to develop basic skills in reading, writing, listening, and speaking Yiddish. By the end of the course, students should be able to understand and participate in a conversation on a variety of everyday topics, read simple texts, be prepared to tackle more complex texts with the aid of a dictionary, and write short compositions on a variety of everyday topics. We will look at history, literature, folklore, film, news articles, and archival material to get a sense of the breadth and depth of Yiddish culture and language. Yiddish is the key to a thousand years of Eastern European Jewish civilization — *vayter*, c'mon, let's go!

Active classroom participation is very important, as are homework assignments— always due for the next class. Completing these will help you get a sense of your own progress and to identify questions. I am always happy to meet with students to discuss any questions or concerns you may have about the class, or to offer assistance.

Materials
1. **Textbook:** *In eynem: A Communicative Approach to Yiddish*, edited by Asya Vaisman Schulman, Jordan Brown, and Michael Yashinsky

2. **Yiddish dictionary.** A recommended classic is the *Modern English-Yiddish / Yiddish-English Dictionary* by Uriel Weinreich, available for purchase online: https://www.amazon.ca/Modern-English-Yiddish-Dictionary-Uriel-Weinreich/dp/0805205756.

The *Comprehensive English-Yiddish Dictionary* published in 2016 is excellent, but note that it is only English-Yiddish: https://www.amazon.ca/Comprehensive-English-Yiddish-Dictionary-Gitl-Schaechter-Viswanath/dp/0253022827.

An online dictionary called **verterbukh.org** is available to U of T students via the library: https://guides.library.utoronto.ca/c.php?g=250978&p=1672547

Some classes will be accompanied by PowerPoint presentations or digital resources. All of these will be made available on the course website.

Grading/Evaluation
Attendance and class participation 20%
Homework assignments 30%
Midterm test 25%
Final test (in-class) 25%

Workload, assignments, testing and course policies

1. **Attendance and participation.** Students are expected to attend all classes and arrive on time. Preparation for class includes completing all homework assignments, participating in discussion, and paying attention in class. Each absence will count 5% against attendance, unless declared via the **Absence Declaration Tool** in ACORN.

   As an A&S undergraduate student, if you miss an academic obligation and wish to seek academic consideration, you may declare an absence using the Absence Declaration Tool. The ACORN Absence Declaration Tool is intended to be used in the following circumstances:
   - A health condition or injury (e.g., illness, serious physical harm, mental health issue, scheduled surgery)
   - A personal or family emergency (e.g., unanticipated and unavoidable familial incident beyond the student's control)
   - Bereavement (e.g., the death of a student's immediate family member or close friend)

   Please note, the ACORN Absence Declaration Tool is *not* intended to be used in the following circumstances:
   - Personal social obligations
   - Travel not related to your academic program
   - Technological issues
   - The avoidance of deadlines or tests

2. **Homework assignments.** Homework will be assigned at the end of each class. Students are required to complete all homework by the next class, unless (only in the case of extenuating circumstances) other arrangements are made in advance. Work submitted on time will be returned in a timely manner, usually within two weeks of submission. Late homework assignments will not be accepted, unless accompanied by a doctor's note; otherwise, each late homework will be count 5% against your final grade.

   Please note that these assignments are the most important part of your coursework. Not only are they a great indicator of your progress in the course; it has been proven that students who do not complete all assignments do not do well on either the mid-term or the final test.

3. **Midterm test.** This in-class test will consist of written-in-class assignments that will assess your reading comprehension and proficiency in grammar and vocabulary. This will serve as preparation for your final exam.

4. **Final test.** This in-class test will check your reading comprehension, proficiency in grammar, and vocabulary.

Please do not hesitate to speak with me if you have any difficulties, concerns, or questions. You may e-mail me, drop in during office hours or schedule an appointment. Let me know if you have special interests in the field of Yiddish studies, and I will try to incorporate them into our program!

Inappropriate Use of Mobile Devices/Computers
Laptops, phones or similar mobile devices must be off during class time! Mobile phones and laptops can be used during class only with the explicit permission of the instructor. No texting is allowed. In case of repeated texting despite warnings from the instructor, the student's participation grade will be lowered automatically by 10%.

Use of Generative AI in Assignments
Students may use artificial intelligence tools, including generative AI, in this course as learning aids or to help produce assignments. However, students are ultimately accountable for the work they submit.

Be advised: *AI redt a shlekhtn yidish* — AI speaks Yiddish terribly. AI tools may help you *approximate* translations, but they will certainly lead you astray when it comes to translating idiomatic Yiddish. And Yiddish is a very idiomatic language, with lots of quirky Hebrew/Aramaic turns of phrase that don't translate easily at all. So *zol zayn mit mazl* — good luck if you do tread in AI waters, and be prepared for laughter and bewilderment!

Academic Integrity Statement
Academic integrity is defined as the pursuit of scholarly activity in an open, honest and responsible manner. All students should act with personal integrity, respect other students' dignity, rights and property, and help create and maintain an environment in which all can succeed through the fruits of their efforts. Dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated in this course. Dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarizing, fabricating information or citations, facilitating acts of academic dishonesty by others, having unauthorized possession of examinations, submitting work of another person or work previously used without informing the instructor, using online translators, or tampering with the academic work of other students. Students who are found to be dishonest will receive academic sanctions and will be reported to the University's Judicial Affairs office for possible further disciplinary sanction. Please visit

http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm for additional information on the code of behaviour on academic matters.

Disability Access
The department encourages qualified people with disabilities to participate in its programs and activities and is committed to the policy that all people shall have equal access to programs, facilities, and admissions without regard to personal characteristics not related to ability, performance, or qualifications as determined by university policy or by provincial or federal authorities. If you anticipate needing any type of accommodation in this course or have questions about physical access, the classrooms as well as course materials, please contact Accessibility Services and visit http://studentlife.utoronto.ca/accessibility or disability.services@utoronto.ca as soon as possible.