

GER 361

# Adventures in YIDDISHLAND

INTRO TO MODERN YIDDISH LITERATURE

Class Meets:  
Friday 1-3pm  
OH323

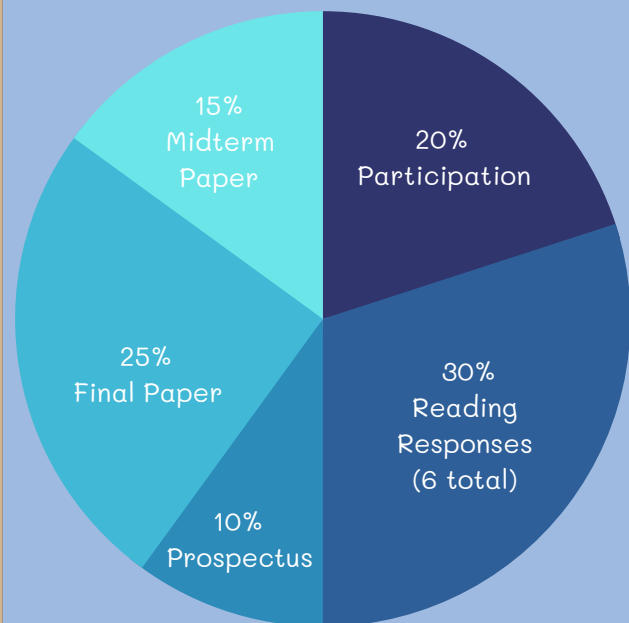
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Office hours: Fri 3-4pm  
OH 326.

## DESCRIPTION

How do we chart a space that doesn't exist on any map? Although it was once the spoken language of the majority of the world's Jews, Yiddish has never had an official homeland. This course is a journey through culture and memory in search of Yiddishland.

Departing from the fictional shtetl (Jewish town), we begin with the emergence of modern Yiddish literature in 19th-century Eastern Europe and trace its development through the 20th century in different locales all over the world. We will also look at recent expressions of Yiddishland in contemporary literature, music, and film. The tension between exile and homeland that pervades Jewish cultural consciousness finds a broad spectrum of expression in the texts that we'll read together. (All readings are in English translation. No knowledge of Yiddish is required.)

## REQUIREMENTS



## CALENDAR

1

SEPT 8

### Shtetl Fabulous

Introduction

2

SEPT 15

### Capital of Yiddishland

Mendele Moykher Sforim

3

SEPT 22

### Tradition & Modernity

Sholem Aleichem

4

SEPT 29

### Beyond the Pale

I.L. Peretz

5

OCT 6

### Between Worlds

S. Ansky

6

OCT 13

### Decline & Destruction

Dovid Bergelson, L. Shapiro

7

OCT 20

### Gendered Spaces

Celia Dropkin, Anna Margolin,  
Esther Kreitman

8

OCT 27

### Mourning the Old World

I.B. Singer

9

NOV 3

### Soviet Yiddishland

M. Kulbak, P. Markish

Midterm Paper

NOV 10

### Reading Week

(NO CLASS)

10

NOV 17

### Yiddish in Israel

Abraham Sutzkever

Prospectus

11

NOV 24

### Recreating Yiddishland

Aaron Lansky,  
Michael Chabon

12

DEC 1

### Disney(Yiddish)land

Dara Horn, et al

DEC 8

Final Paper

## READINGS, ASSIGNMENTS, EXPECTATIONS

Weekly reading assignments will be posted on Quercus at least a week in advance. See the following pages for additional course information.

## Requirements

Participation (20%): Your enjoyment and success in this course rely on your active engagement. It is your responsibility to come to class having completed the readings and prepared to participate with informed comments and questions.

Reading Responses (30%): Every week, I will post discussion questions intended to help guide your reading. The reading response is an opportunity to react to one of these questions and to prepare you for the upcoming class discussion. Your responses should be focused, brief, and to the point; a paragraph or two (150-250 words) will suffice.

Midterm Paper (15%): This short paper (500-750 words) is intended to help you synthesize the first half of the semester and to hone your close reading and writing skills. I will post two prompts, each comparing two different authors, from which to choose. You are not required to do outside research. More detailed instructions will be provided under separate cover.

Prospectus (10%): Writing is a process. In order to produce a successful final paper, I will ask you to consult with me on a topic (by week nine) before beginning to draft your prospectus. The prospectus must contain (a) an abstract that includes a research question and provisional thesis statement, and (b) an annotated bibliography of 2-3 scholarly articles or books.

Final Paper (25%): The final paper requires careful analysis of one or two texts and the consultation of relevant scholarly literature. It should be roughly 8 pages (2000 words) and include properly formatted citations. Specific guidelines will be provided later on.

## Expectations

Absences: You are permitted only one unexcused absence, and it is your responsibility to keep up with the readings and assignments. If you register late for the course, this will count as your unexcused absence. Each subsequent unexcused absence will result in a 10% reduction of your final grade.

Missed/late work: Reading Responses must be submitted prior to class, as they provide the foundation for class discussion, and I cannot accept late submissions. Extensions for other assignments must be discussed with me well before the deadline.

Communication: Should any issues arise pertaining to the course, it is important that you schedule an appointment with me as soon as possible, so that we can address them together in a productive and timely fashion. Please don't wait until late in the term. I make every effort to respond to emails within 24 hours during the week, but I do not check my email throughout the day nor on weekends.

Mobile Devices & Computers: I'm old school; I prefer print to digital. I like to highlight passages and write notes in the margins of a printed text. If you prefer to read from a screen,

be sure that you have a way to take clear notes and access them in class. You need to be able to refer directly to the text at hand. All other mobile devices should be put away during class.

Accessibility: UofT is committed to providing equal access to all students. If you require accommodations or have accessibility concerns, please contact [Accessibility Services](#) and visit the University's [accessibility website](#). Please note that restrictions and required services should be communicated to the instructor as soon as possible.

Academic Integrity Statement: Academic integrity is defined as the pursuit of scholarly activity in an open, honest and responsible manner. Dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated in this course. Dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, plagiarizing, fabricating information or citations, facilitating acts of academic dishonesty by others, and submitting previously used work or the work of another person. For more information check UofT's [Academic Integrity Website](#).

Privacy Considerations: Students may not record any portion of a lecture without prior permission of the instructor. According to the Provost's guidelines on the [Appropriate Use of Information and Communication Technology](#): *The unauthorized use of any form of device to audiotape, photograph, video-record or otherwise reproduced lectures, course notes or teaching materials provided by instructors is covered by the Canadian Copyright Act and is prohibited. Students must obtain prior written consent to such recording. In the case of private use by students with disabilities, the instructor's consent must not be unreasonably withheld.* Creating unauthorized audio recording of lectures and/or taking screenshots of class chats, discussion board entries or other class content and distributing them via the Internet using social media (such as Facebook, peer-to-peer file sharing such as One Drive or Dropbox, or other distribution channels) violate intellectual property rights and the Canadian Copyright Act. Students violating this agreement will be subject to disciplinary actions under the Code of Student Conduct. In accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, persons who have special needs will be accommodated. See UofT's [grading policy](#) for more information on how to interpret grades.

### **Additional Information**

Background Information: The literature we are studying represents a culture that may be unfamiliar to you. You will regularly encounter new names, terms, and concepts. The following resources contain a wealth of useful information about all things Jewish/Yiddish.

YIVO Encyclopaedia of Jews in Eastern Europe

<http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org>

Jewish Encyclopaedia

<http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/>

Yiddish Book Center

<http://www.yiddishbookcenter.org/>

Office Hours & Email: I want to help you succeed in this course! Please come see me in office hours or email me with any questions or concerns that may arise.