The University of Toronto

**YIDDISH LITERATURE IN TRANSLATION**

GERMAN 361H / Fall 2020

Instructor:  **ALEXANDRA HOFFMAN**  
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Email:  sasha.hoffman@utoronto.ca
Online Office Hours:  Thurs 1-2 (& by app.)  
Tel.:  647-609-7215

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**DESCRIPTION AND COURSE GOALS**

This 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. Yiddish literature bears the markings of *goles* – diaspora, exile – as the language carries within it the history of Jewish migrations within and beyond Europe. Its development has been driven by various ideological aspirations which were associated with locales just as varied. The stateless literature has a conceptual home in English translation. Through readings (in English) of modern Yiddish prose, poetry, drama and cinema, we can examine the different strategies Yiddish writers adopted in confronting the changing political and cultural reality around them.

While honing their analytical reading and writing skills, and participating in class discussions, students will gain a better understanding of the intersections of ethnic and gender identities, political ideology, and literary aspects of Yiddish cultural production.

Please don’t hesitate to email or call me with any questions, concerns, comments, etc.

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**REQUIRED BOOKS**

All readings available through the course website or in class.

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**REQUIREMENTS / EVALUATION**

- Preparation and participation in class discussion: 30%
- Presentation of the week's reading: 10%
- Reflections on readings: 20%
- Final Paper (10 pages): 40%

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**PLEASE NOTE:** THIS IS A DRAFT, A FINAL VERSION OF THE SYLLABUS WILL BE AVAILABLE IN SEPTEMBER
The course requires your thoughtful engagement with Yiddish literature. Much of this is achieved through regular attendance and participation in class discussion. One very short presentation (10 minutes or so) about or relating to the week’s readings is in this vein of communal learning.

The short weekly reflections (a paragraph is more than enough) are very open in terms of content. They can be a brief elucidation of a stylistic or thematic pattern you noticed in the reading, an interpretation of a particularly beautiful/moving passage, an articulation of a question that the reading raises for you, a brief comparison between two-three of the week’s readings, a sketch of how the text relates to something else we’ve read, etc. These short reflections are also meant to facilitate discussion in class. They are due via email before the beginning of class.

The final paper requires a more careful analysis of one or two texts, with consultation of a couple of scholarly articles. Writing is a process. In order to produce a significant paper, I will ask you to write in steps: topic consultation, bibliography, draft, argument. The topic is quite open. You may also complete a creative translation project. Please consult with me by October 22 regarding the topic of your paper, and we’ll move on from there.

RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS, DISABILITY ACCOMMODATIONS, AND ATHLETIC COMMITMENTS

If you will be observing any religious holidays this semester which will prevent you from attending a regularly scheduled class or interfere with your fulfilling any course requirement, inform your instructor of the dates of your religious holiday(s) within two weeks of the beginning of the semester or immediately if your holiday is near the beginning of the semester so that we may make appropriate alternative plans.

In order for your disabilities and athletic activities to be appropriately accommodated, you must provide documentation during the first two weeks of class (or as soon as possible if a disability, including mental illness, emerges during the semester).

The University’s Accessibility Services Office is located at 455 Spadina Avenue, 4th Floor, Suite 400; Phone: 416-978-8060; Email: accessibility.services@utoronto.ca.

The University’s Health & Wellness Centre is located at 214 College Street, 2nd Floor. Phone: 416-978-8030. https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/department/health-wellness/#node-1084

GENDER PRONOUN PREFERENCES

Please let me know if I can help you establish your preferences for this class, at any point of the semester.
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“Between Two Mountains” trans. Helena Frank  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>References</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 19</td>
<td>Yiddish literature in Canada and Israel after the Holocaust</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov. 26</td>
<td>Yiddish literature in the U.S. after the Holocaust</td>
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<td>Week 12</td>
<td>The state of translation and contemporary Yiddish literary and cultural projects</td>
<td>In geveb, Yiddish Book Center, Ashkenaz, Yidlife Crisis, Yiddish Glory.</td>
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