

English 3366
Jewish-American Literature
Instructor: Dr. Irving N. Rothman
Tuesday & Thursday 8:30am -10:00am

Abstract: Jewish-American authors have been writing since their arrival in colonial America. It may even be possible to identify earlier immigrants, Marrano Jews escaping the Spanish Inquisition and sailing to the New World with Columbus. The course will study historical literature, profound sociological literature, incisive psychological literature, and even classical Jewish jokes. It will cover writers like Haym Salomon who assisted in the American Revolution and Emma Lazarus whose words appear on the Statue of Liberty. It will study the literature of the great period of immigration from 1881-1924, a period of fruition that saw new ideas and diverse populations in a America that T.S. Eliot mistakenly called "A" Wasteland." The world that recognized Shalom Asch and Anzia Yezicka also saw the emergent families of Groucho Marx and Woody Allen. Famous writers resonate in standard literary classes—Gertrude Stein, Nathanael West, Louis Zukovsky, Muriel Rukeyser, Delmore Schwartz, and Karl Shapiro. The course will be enriched with writings of Bernard Malamud and Grace Paley and the scathing political attacks of Nora Mailer, Allen Ginsburg (the beat poet), and Phillip Roth. Two Nobel Prize Winners in Literature will be studied, Saul Bellow (born in Canada) and Isaac Bashevis Singer (born in Poland), both U.S. citizens. We are a nation of immigrants who have found literature as a mode of expression.

Objectives:

- To Familiarize students with immigrant literature
- To identify the origins of Jewish literary culture in the United States
- To identify separate historical movements in the development of a Jewish-American thought
- To urge the expansion of the reading from the anthology to full-length works
- To provide the mechanism needed for the conduct of research into the literature
- To understand the psychology, sociology, and rhetoric of Jewish-American writers

Texts:

- Jewish American Literature. A Norton Anthology. Ed. Jules Chametzky and John Felstiner. New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001. Hardback. ISBN 0-393-04809-8
- The Cambridge Companion to Jewish American Literature. Ed. Michael p. Kramer and Hana Wirth-Neshher. Cambridge, engl.:Cambridge University Press, 2003. Paperback. ISBN 0-521-79699 7 (pbk) Identified as CC in the syllabus.