

Department of English  
University of Houston  
Houston, TX 77204-3013

SPRING SEMESTER 2012

**English 3366 (Sect. TBA): Jewish-American Literature**

Instructor: Dr. Irving N. Rothman

T/TH 8:30-10:00 a.m. 108C      Office: 232B Roy Cullen Bldg. • E-mail: [irothman@uh.edu](mailto:irothman@uh.edu)

**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 an America that T. S. Eliot mistakenly called “A Wasteland.” The world that recognized Shalom Asch and Anzia Yezierska 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 the writings of Bernard Malamud and Grace Paley and the scathing political attacks of Norma 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-Nesher. Cambridge, Engl.: Cambridge University Press, 2003. Paperback. ISBN 0-521-79699 7 (pbk) Identified as CC in the syllabus.

**READING SCHEDULE:**

**JANUARY**

- T 17    Introd., Selections from the *Norton Anthology of Jewish American Literature*, pp. 17-53.  
      Chptr 1— Origins of Jewish American Literary History [*Cambridge Companion*, pp. 12-30]
- TH 19    Selections from Norton, pp. 54-106
  
- T 24    Selections from the *Norton Anthology of Jewish American Literature*, pp. 122-161  
      Chptr 2 CC: Imagining Judaism in America [CC 31-49]
- TH 26    Norton, pp. 206-252
  
- T 31    Selections from the *Norton Anthology of Jewish American Literature*, pp. 289-326

- Chptr 3—Of Crucibles and Grandfathers: the East European Immigrants [CC 50-69]  
TH 2 Selections from the *Norton Anthology of Jewish American Literature*, pp. 327-369

#### FEBRUARY

- T 7 Selections from the *Norton Anthology of Jewish American Literature*, pp. 370-41  
Chptr 4—Coney Island, USA: America in the Yiddish Literary Imagination [CC 70-91]  
TH 9 Norton, pp. 413-450
- T 14 Selections from the *Norton Anthology of Jewish American Literature*, pp. 451-500  
Chptr 5—Hebrew Literature in America [CC 92-109]  
TH 16 Selections from the *Norton Anthology of Jewish American Literature*, pp. 501-533
- T 21 Selections from the *Norton Anthology of Jewish American Literature*, pp. 534-571  
Chptr 6—Traces of the Past: multilingual Jewish American Writing [CC 111-128]  
TH 23 Selections from the *Norton Anthology of Jewish American Literature*, pp. 586-630
- T 28 Selections from the *Norton Anthology of Jewish American Literature*, pp. 631-680  
Chptr 7—Accents of the Future: Jewish American Popular Culture [CC 129-148]  
TH 1 Selections from the *Norton Anthology of Jewish American Literature*, 681-717

#### MARCH

- T 6 Selections from the *Norton Anthology of Jewish American Literature*, pp. 678-715  
Chptr 8—Jewish American Poetry [CC 148-169]  
TH 8 Mid-Term Exam

Monday, March 12—Saturday, March 17 Spring Vacation

- T 20 Selections from the *Norton Anthology of Jewish American Literature*, pp. 718-748  
Chptr 9—Jewish American Writers on the Left [CC 170-189]  
TH 22 Selections from the *Norton Anthology of Jewish American Literature*, pp. 749-769
- T 27 Selections from the *Norton Anthology of Jewish American Literature*, pp. 770-811  
Chptr 10—Jewish American Renaissance [CC 190-211]  
TH 29 Selections from the *Norton Anthology of Jewish American Literature*, pp. 812-847

#### APRIL

- T 3 Selections from the *Norton Anthology of Jewish American Literature*, pp. 851-910  
Chptr 11—The Holocaust in the Jewish American Literary Imagination [CC 212-230]  
TH 5 Selections from the *Norton Anthology of Jewish American Literature*, pp. 911-945; 968-977
- T 10 Selections from the *Norton Anthology of Jewish American Literature*, pp. 986-1034  
Chptr 12—Jewish American Women Writers and the Race Question [CC 31-249]  
TH 12 Selections from the *Norton Anthology of Jewish American Literature*, pp. 1045-1080
- T 17 Selections from the *Norton Anthology of Jewish American Literature*, pp. 1085-1104  
Chptr 13—On Contemporary Literature and Jewish American Poetics [CC 250-268]  
Also: Edward Hirsch, President of the Guggenheim Foundation, former UH faculty member;  
Cynthia Macdonald, UH professor emeritus, creative writing; David Biespiel, Houston native,  
editor *The Northwest Review*)
- TH 19 *Norton Anthology of Jewish American Literature*, pp. 1021-1034, 1074-1080, 1095-1105  
Max Apple, *The Oranging of America, Zip, Free Agents, Propheteers, the Jew of Home Depot.*  
TH 19 Research paper due, 10-12 pp. + documentation]

- T 24 The influence of Saul Bellow  
 Chptr 14—Identity Matters: Contemporary Jewish American Writing [CC 269-284]
- TH 26 The cataclysmic world of Philip Roth  
 Introduction to Michael Chabon: *The Mysteries of Pittsburgh, A Model World and Other Stories, The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay* (winner of the Pulitzer Prize in Literature), *Wonder Boys, Werewolves in Their Youth, and The Yiddish Policeman's Union*.

T May 1 Reading Period

T May 8 Final Exam 8-11 a.m.

Assignments: 4-5-page Essay, Tuesday, January 31  
 Mid-Term Examination, Thursday, March 8  
 Research paper (10-12 pp. + documentation, 4,000–4500 words), April 17  
 Final Examination, May 6, 8 a.m.-11 a.m.

Because classes are shared with student participation, regular attendance is important and documented.

Each student will have the responsibility of introducing a story or set of poems to the class following a formula provided by the instructor. The student will be allowed 20 minutes for the initial presentation. Other works may also be discussed that day.

#### **BIBLIOGRAPHY:**

- American Jewish Fiction*. Ed. Josh Lambert. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2009.
- Awake and Singing: Six Great American Jewish Plays*. Ed. Ellen Schiff. N.Y.: Applause Theatre & Cinema Books, 2004.
- Azure Magazine: Ideas for the Jewish Nation*. Editor-in-Chief, Assaf Sagiv. The Shalem Center. 5505 Connecticut Ave., NW, No. 1140, Washington, D.C. 20015. [www.azure.org.il](http://www.azure.org.il).
- The Bar-Mitzvah Treasury*. Ed. Azriel Eisenberg. N.Y.: Behrman Housd, Inc., 1952.
- Bernheimer, Kathryn. *The 50 Greatest Jewish Movies: A Critic's Ranking of the Very Best*. Seacaucus, N.J.: Carol Publishing Group, 1998. PN1995.9.J46B47 1998; ISBN: 1-55972-457-9.
- Cappell, Ezra. *American Talmud: The Cultural Work of Jewish American Fiction*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007. PSI53.J4 C37 2007.
- Chabon, Michael. *The Yiddish Policeman's Union*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2007. ISBN: 10: 0-00-714982-4. (Also by Chabon: *The Mysteries of Pittsburgh, A Model World and Other Stories, Wonder Boys, Werewolves in Their Youth, The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier & Clay, Summerland, and Final Solution*.)
- Codde, Philippe. *The Jewish American Novel*. Comparative Cultural Studies. W. Lafayette, IND: Purdue UP, 2007.
- Dann, Jack, ed. *Wandering Stars: An Anthology of Jewish Fantasy and Science Fiction*. Introd. Isaac Asimov. N.Y.: Harper & Row, 1974.
- . *More Wandering Stars: An Anthology of Outstanding Stories of Jewish Fantasy and Science Fiction*. Introd. Isaac Asimov. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 1999.
- Eichorn, David Max. *Jewish Folklore in America*. Middle Village, New York: Jonathan David Publishers, Inc., 1996. E184.J5J5564 1996; ISBN: 0-8246-0384-2 (hc)
- Erens, Patricia. *The Jew in American Cinema*. Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1984. PN1995.9546.E7 1984.
- Pinsker, Sanford. *The Schlemiel as Metaphor: Studies in the Yiddish and American Jewish Novel*. Crosscurrents/Modern Critiques. Gen. Ed. Harry T. Moore: Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois UP and London and Amsterdam: Feffer & n Sinons, Inc. 1971.
- The Prairie Schooner Anthology of Contemporary Jewish American Writing*. Ed. Hilda Raz. Lincoln and London: U of Nebraska P, 1997.




Cite a productive means of analysis. Briefly show how this work may apply, for example, in Structuralist, Modernist, Deconstruction, Psychological, Historical, Sociological, Rhetorical theory, or in Talmudic, Mishnaic, or Kabbalistic expression.

A memorable quotation from the work:


A memorable quotation from the work:


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Signature of student making this presentation:

Date:

Jewish Films or Films with Jewish Content

The Chosen	The Last Angry Man
Fiddler on the Roof	The Outside Chance of Maximilian Glick
Schindler's List	The Revolt of Job
Shoah	Homicide
The Jazz Singer	Madame Rosa
Annie Hall	Driving Miss Daisy
Funny Girl	Reversal of Fortune
Gentleman's Agreement	Europa, Europa
Exodus	The Big Fix
Ben-Hur/The Ten Commandments	Broadway Danny Rose
Crossing Delancey	Julia
The Golem	Marathon Man
Au Revoir, Les Enfants	A Majority of One
Almonds and Raisins: A History	Oliver!
Enemies, a Love Story	Down Out in Beverly Hills
The Great Dictator	Holocaust
The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz	Dirty Dancing
Blazing Saddles	The Front
Chariots of Fire	Biloxi Blues
Body and Soul	The Diary of Anne Frank
The Pawnbroker	Shine
Goodby Columbus	Daniel
Bugsy	Yentl
Cabaret	The Young Lions
Crimes and Misdemeanors	Marjorie Morningstar
The Reader (2009)	Defiance (2009)