JEWISH STUDIES 3790G: YIDDISH FILM AND LITERATURE

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Class Hours (Huron H227): Wednesdays 1.30-4.20pm
Office Hours (A214, by appointment only): Wednesdays, 4.30pm-5.30pm, Fridays 10.30-11.30am

Official Course Description
This course explores topics in Jewish Art and Literature. Consult the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences for current offerings. Extra information: 3 hours.

Course Description

“Earthy, expressive, marked by the experience of dispersion and marginality, and lacking the scriptural authority of Hebrew, Yiddish is neither entirely respectful nor altogether respectable.” (James Groberman, Bridge of Light: Yiddish Film Between Two Worlds)

In this course we will survey Yiddish film and literature (in translation) to introduce students to the vibrant Yiddish culture in Eastern Europe and its immigrant centres in the United States, Canada, Israel, and elsewhere from its beginnings through the present day. The course looks at literary works and cinema as ways of reading Jewish responses to different experiences of the last 150 years: immigration, the Holocaust, Hassidic life and the Jewish supernatural. As part of the course, students will explore this world via a wide-ranging selection of material including literary texts and films as well as academic studies of literature, film, and related theory. No previous knowledge of Yiddish is required.

Course Learning Outcomes
By the end of the course, students will have a solid understanding of a significant branch of Jewish history and culture, as well as its influence on more general society today. Students will also thereby better understand the contours of Jewishness.

Students will also gain abilities in critical thinking and analysis, while also developing their university-level writing skills.

Course Materials
Readings/Viewings:
Unless otherwise indicated in the syllabus, all the readings and viewings are available via the Western University Library. However, please remain mindful that at times you will need to search a bit to get to the material as some hyperlinks may have changed. Options for obtaining
the viewings are also provided – here you may have to make a small number of purchases to watch all the movies.

As you will no doubt see in the schedule of lectures (see below), this course relies upon an intensive engagement with artistic material that must be read or viewed in a timely fashion. Failure to engage with this material will deeply compromise your success in the course (as well as deprive you of the benefit of having taken it!).

**Grades and Assignments**

*Grades Breakdown:*

- **Viewing/Reading reflections**
  - (first reflection due prior to Feb 17; second reflection due before April 13) …..40% (2x, approx. 1000-1250 words each)

- **Henia Reinhartz, *Bits and Pieces*** (due date March 29) …..10% (approx. 750-1000 words)

- **Weekly Responses/Participation** …..20% (10x, approx. 250 words each)

- **Final Take Home Exam** (due date April 19): …..30%

- **International Holocaust Remembrance Day event** (January 18) …..5% (bonus)

**Viewing/Reading Reflections:** Students select any two movies or pieces of fiction assigned during the course and submit a short paper on each work. To receive a high mark, students must focus their discussion on the work’s context and main themes, as well as provide their own thoughts on the work. Consulting external scholarly sources will also illustrate a student’s engagement with the material. NB: Students are also permitted to submit artistic/creative treatments of the works and their themes, with the professor’s advance permission.

*Henia Reinhartz, *Bits and Pieces* assignment*:

In tandem with Hillel Western and the French Studies program at Huron, the Jewish Studies program is hosting a Book Club where students can read and explore a Holocaust memoir published by the Azrieli Holocaust Survivor Memoirs Program and participate in a discussion/social event related to the subject. In this course, you will also produce a short reflection (750-1000-words) on Reinhartz’s memoir, laying out a response to *at least* one of the following questions:

- a. Which part of her memoir do you think affected her most deeply? Why?
- b. Which part of her memoir affected you most deeply? Why?
- c. What was the role of Yiddish in her life?
d. Do you think Henia wanted to remember or forget the Holocaust?

You are also obliged to submit one question for our March 30 guest speaker (Jody Spiegel, director of the Azrieli Holocaust Memoirs Program) and attend the event on March 30 at 6:30pm in the Huron Great Hall.

**Weekly Responses/Participation (approximately 250 words)**

Each week students will be obliged to provide a response (approximately 250 words) to the weekly question posed. Each response must represent a sincere attempt to engage with the question and should make reference to the weekly readings and viewings. These assignments must be submitted to hteslerm@huron.uwo.ca by midnight on the Tuesday immediately before the class to count for credit (and to help you prepare for each class!). **Failure to submit a response to at least five (5) questions throughout the course of the term will result in an incomplete (INC) for the course.**

Students will also receive a participation grade based on their contributions to each class.

**Final Take home exam**

For the final exam, students will be obliged to engage with and answer a critical question (or two) relating to Yiddish culture. Further details will be provided over the course of the term.

**International Holocaust Remembrance Day (Bonus)**

The Jewish Studies program at Huron at Western will be hosting – along with its partners – an event devoted to International Holocaust Remembrance Day. On the evening of January 18, we will be screening the feature film *The Survivor*. Students who register for and attend this event will automatically receive a bonus 5 points in the course. To register: https://huronatwestern.ca/events-archive/the-survivor-film-screening-in-recognition-of-international-holocaust-remembrance-day/?utm_source=JCC+London+Subscribers&utm_campaign=b5148f2dee-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2017_11_22_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_e08163ef57-b5148f2dee-114596584&mc_cid=b5148f2dee&mc_eid=f3f4dcfc6

**Policy on Late Submissions**

I do not accept late submissions and trust that students will submit their work in a timely manner. I therefore encourage you to look over the syllabus and plan accordingly. For more information on academic accommodations for medical and non-medical reasons please consult the appendix below.

**The Jewish Studies Program at Huron**

This course is offered under the auspices of the Jewish Studies Program at Huron, which offers a variety of courses in an interdisciplinary environment in the areas of Jewish culture, philosophy, history, art, and theology. It also offers **scholarships** for students who are a part of the program as well as numerous other opportunities for experiential learning (travel!) and networking. For more information, visit https://huronatwestern.ca/programs/arts-social-science/jewish-studies/

**Schedule of Lectures (Subject to Change):**
Wednesday January 11  
**Introduction; The Yiddish “World”**

Reading:
[https://www.britannica.com/art/Yiddish-literature](https://www.britannica.com/art/Yiddish-literature) “Introduction”

Wednesday January 18  
**What was once our home – The Shtetl**

Readings:
IL Peretz *The Dead Town* (trans. Helena Frank, publ. 1906)
[https://www.gutenberg.org/files/37242/37242-h/37242-h.htm#page_185](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/37242/37242-h/37242-h.htm#page_185)

Scholem Aleichem, *The Clock that Struck Thirteen*  

Viewing:
Norman Jewison, dir., *Fiddler on the Roof* (USA, 1971, 179 min.)

Weekly Question: Compare and contrast the worlds created in *Fiddler on the Roof* and the written works? Why do you think they are different?

Wednesday January 25  
**Tears in the Fabric – the Supernatural**

Reading:

Viewings:
Joel and Ethan Coen, dir., *A Serious Man: Prologue* (USA, 2009, 106 min.)  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aFpn3Cv2CE4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aFpn3Cv2CE4)

Michał Waszyński, dir., *Der Dybbuk* (Poland, 1937, 123 min.)  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-bQCL0UBmLo&t=3s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-bQCL0UBmLo&t=3s)

Weekly Question: What do you think the Supernatural represents in each of the treatments?

Wednesday February 1  
**Tears in the Fabric – Gender**

Readings:

Viewings:

Joseph Green, dir., *Yiddle with his Fiddle/ Yidl mitn fidl* (Poland, 1936, 92 min.)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lQGBZ_2tf5k

F.W. Murnau, dir. *Nosferatu* (Germany, 1922, 94 min.) (22.00-26.00)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FC6jFoYm3xs

Barbra Streisand, dir., *Yentl* (USA, 1983, 131 min.)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iUU1OOhBRCw (trailer only)

Weekly Question: Why do you think Yiddish writers produced works that talked about the subversion of gender roles? Why did audiences enjoy it?

**Wednesday February 8**

**Emigration – Leaving the Shtetl**

**Readings:**

Sholem Aleichem, *Hodel* (by 1905)
http://www.brooklyn.net/classes/y371/texts_371/hodel.html


Franz Kafka, *An Introductory Talk on the Yiddish Language* (1912)

**Viewings:**

Maurice Schwartz, dir., *Tevye* (USA, 1939, 93 min.)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q4CqthipSg0&t=2s

Weekly Question: Why did Jews leave the Shtetl behind?

**Wednesday February 15**

**Recreating the Shtetl? [Der Neue Shtetl in New York]**

**Reading:**


**Listening:**

Morris Rosenfeld *Die Grine kusine* (“The Greenhorn Cousin”)
http://www.teachgreatjewishbooks.org/6-song-greenhorn-cousin-di-grine-kuzine-1921

Viewing:
Alexander Marten, dir., Without a Home (Poland, 1939, 84 min.)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Az1BM6a6YA&t=4424s

Weekly Question: Why might Jews not want to leave the Shtetl behind? Why did some Jews want to?

Wednesday February 22  No Class

Wednesday March 1  Immigration, Pt II – Recreating our World or creating a new world?

Reading:

Viewing:
Daniel Burman, dir., The Tenth Man [El Rey del Once] (Argentina, 2016, 80 min.) Available for streaming via the Western library (Kanopy)

Weekly Question: In what ways are Argentinian Jews and their community different from or similar to American or Canadian Jews and the community found in North America? What explains their similarities or differences?

Wednesday March 8  The Holocaust – Experience

Readings:

Aaron Liebeskind (sung by Aleksander Kulisiewicz), “Lullaby for my Little Son in the Crematorium” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FqgBbbL4DXU

Viewing:
Laszlo Nemes, dir., Son of Saul (Hungary, 2015, 107 min.) Available for purchase on Amazon

Weekly Question: Is the dead boy in Son of Saul really Saul’s son? Does it matter one way or another?

Wednesday March 15  The Holocaust – Remembering or Forgetting?

Readings:

Henia Reinhartz, Bits and Pieces (The Azrieli Foundation, 2015)

Viewing:
Marcin Wrona, dir., Demon (Poland, 2015, 94 min.)

Weekly Question: Do you think Jews want to forget the Holocaust? How about others like Poles? Why or why not is each community not able to do so?

Wednesday March 22

Reading:
The Remnant – Was there anyone left?

Viewing:
The Last Klezmer (1994)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gyfc3AahLtE&list=RDgyfc3AahLtE&start_radio=1
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4HdZmJVRrTA&list=RDgyfc3AahLtE&index=2
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tnSOML1pLg&list=RDgyfc3AahLtE&index=3
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1imykeQJiw_Q&list=RDgyfc3AahLtE&index=4
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YVL7FaOyQj8&list=RDgyfc3AahLtE&index=5

Narishkayt: YidLife Crisis in Krakow (Full Film) (Canada, 37 min., 2018) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J02GfyCDJl4

Weekly Question: Do you think only Jews can or should perform Klezmer? Why or why not?

Wednesday March 29

Brave New World: Contested Identities
(Hassidism; Zionism)

Viewings:
Billy Lumby, dir., Samuel 613 (UK, 2015, 16 min.)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=71&v=0T1BLg9FtNw&feature=emb_logo

The Tent (Israel, 1950, 9 min.)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QG4UIInPU_lc&list=PL95D788E26C9D7CC8&index=9

Zay Gezunt, Jerusalem (Israel, 2015, 11 min.)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=303&v=_OcyAV_fTPU&feature=emb_logo
Eran Torbiner, dir., *Bunda'im* (Israel, 2012, 48 min.)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QqghMdFISkA

Weekly Question: Is Yiddish welcome in Israel? Why or why not?

**Wednesday April 5**

*Laughing through tears, Hollywood confronts Yiddish*

Readings:

Viewings:
Woody Allen, dir., *Annie Hall* (USA, 1977, 93 min.)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WYY9Epog0rs (excerpt)

Keith Truesdell, dir., *Curb Your Enthusiasm* (Season 2, Episode 9: “The Baptism”) (USA, 2001, 30 min.)

*Yidlife Crisis* (Season 2, Episode 3: The Double Date (Canada, 2016, 6 min.)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A2QlWFSakaM

Weekly Question: Why is Yiddish culture “funny”?
Appendix to Course Outlines: Academic Policies & Regulations Fall/Winter 2022-2023

Huron will continue to follow the guidance of public health and government officials. It is anticipated that there will be no disruptions to in-person instruction. This is subject to change.

Student Code of Conduct
Membership in the community of Huron University College and Western University implies acceptance by every student of the principle of respect for the rights, responsibilities, dignity and well-being of others and a readiness to support an environment conducive to the intellectual and personal growth of all who study, work and live within it. Upon registration, students assume the responsibilities that such registration entails. While in the physical or online classroom, students are expected to behave in a manner that supports the learning environment of others. Please review the Student Code of Conduct at: https://huronatwestern.ca/sites/default/files/Res%20Life/Student%20Code%20of%20Conduct%20-%20Revised%20September%20202019.pdf.

Prerequisite and Antirequisite Information
Students are responsible for ensuring that they have successfully completed all course prerequisites and that they have not completed any course antirequisites. Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

Attendance Regulations for Examinations
A student is entitled to be examined in courses in which registration is maintained, subject to the following limitations:

1) A student may be debarred from writing the final examination for failure to maintain satisfactory academic standing throughout the year.

2) Any student who, in the opinion of the instructor, is absent too frequently from class or laboratory periods in any course will be reported to the Dean of the Faculty offering the course (after due warning has been given). On the recommendation of the Department concerned, and
with the permission of the Dean of that Faculty, the student will be debarred from taking the regular examination in the course. The Dean of the Faculty offering the course will communicate that decision to the Dean of the Faculty of registration.

Review the policy on Attendance Regulations for Examinations here: Academic Calendar - Western University (uwo.ca)

Statement on Academic Offences
Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following website: Academic Calendar - Western University (uwo.ca). The appeals process is also outlined in this policy as well as more generally at the following website: https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/appealsundergrad.pdf.

Turnitin.com
All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (http://www.turnitin.com).

Statement on Use of Electronic Devices
It is not appropriate to use electronic devices (such as, but not limited to, laptops, tablets, cell phones) in the classroom for non-classroom activities. Such activity is disruptive and distracting to other students and to the instructor, and can inhibit learning. Students are expected to respect the classroom environment and to refrain from inappropriate use of technology and other electronic devices in class.

Statement on Use of Personal Response Systems (“Clickers”)
Personal Response Systems (“clickers”) may be used in some classes. If clickers are to be used in a class, it is the responsibility of the student to ensure that the device is activated and functional. Students must see their instructor if they have any concerns about whether the clicker is malfunctioning. Students must use only their own clicker. If clicker records are used to compute a portion of the course grade:
- the use of somebody else’s clicker in class constitutes a scholastic offence
- the possession of a clicker belonging to another student will be interpreted as an attempt to commit a scholastic offence.

Academic Consideration for Missed Work
All students pursuing academic consideration, regardless of type, must contact their instructors no less than 24 hours following the end of the period of absence to clarify how they will be expected to fulfill the academic responsibilities missed during their absence. Students are reminded that they should consider carefully the implications of postponing tests or midterm exams or delaying submission of work, and are encouraged to make appropriate decisions based on their specific
circumstances.

Students who have conditions for which academic accommodation is appropriate, such as disabilities or ongoing or chronic health conditions, should work with Accessible Education Services to determine appropriate forms of accommodation. Further details concerning policies and procedures may be found at: http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/.

Policy on Academic Consideration for a Medical/ Non-Medical Absence

(a) Consideration on Medical Grounds for assignments worth less than 10% of final grade: Consult Instructor Directly and Contact Academic Advising
When seeking consideration on **medical grounds** for assignments worth *less than 10%* of the final course grade, the student should contact the instructor directly. The student need only share broad outlines of the medical situation. The instructor *may* require the student to submit documentation to the academic advisors, in which case she or he will advise the student and inform the academic advisors to expect documentation. If documentation is requested, the student will need to complete and submit the **Student Medical Certificate**. The instructor may *not* collect medical documentation. The advisors will contact the instructor when the medical documentation is received, and will outline the severity and duration of the medical challenge as expressed on the Student Medical Certificate and in any other supporting documentation. The student will be informed that the instructor has been notified of the presence of medical documentation, and will be instructed to work as quickly as possible with the instructor on an agreement for accommodation.

**b) Medical Grounds for assignments worth 10% or more of final grade: Go Directly to Academic Advising**

University Senate policy, which can be found at [Academic Calendar - Western University (uwo.ca)](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/) requires that all student requests for accommodation on medical grounds for assignments worth *10% or more of the final grade* be made directly to the academic advising office of the home faculty (for Huron students, the “home faculty” is Huron), with supporting documentation in the form (minimally) of the Senate-approved Student Medical Certificate found at: [https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf).

The documentation is submitted in confidence and will not be shown to instructors. The advisors will contact the instructor when the medical documentation is received, and will outline the severity and duration of the medical challenge as expressed on the Student Medical Certificate and in any other supporting documentation. The student will be informed that the instructor has been notified of the presence of medical documentation, and will be instructed to work as quickly as possible with the instructor on an agreement for accommodation. The instructor will not normally deny accommodation where appropriate medical documentation is in place and where the duration it describes aligns with the due date(s) of assignment(s). Before denying a request for accommodation on medical grounds, the instructor will consult with the Dean. The instructor’s decision is appealable to the Dean.

**c) Consideration on Non-Medical Grounds: Consult Huron Support Services/Academic Advising, or email huronsss@uwo.ca.**

Students seeking academic consideration for a **non-medical** absence (e.g. varsity sports, religious, compassionate, or bereavement) will be required to provide appropriate documentation. All consideration requests must include a completed **Consideration Request Form**. Late penalties may apply at the discretion of the instructor.

Please review the full policy on Academic Consideration for medical and non-medical absence at: [accommodation_medical.pdf (uwo.ca)](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf). Consult Huron Academic Advising at huronsss@uwo.ca for any further questions or information.
Support Services
For advice on course selections, degree requirements, and for assistance with requests for medical accommodation, students should email an Academic Advisor in Huron’s Student Support Services at
huronsss@uwo.ca. An outline of the range of services offered is found on the Huron website at: https://huronatwestern.ca/student-life/student-services/.

Department Chairs, Program Directors and Coordinators are also able to answer questions about individual programs. Contact information can be found on the Huron website at: https://huronatwestern.ca/contact/faculty-staff-directory/.

If you think that you are too far behind to catch up or that your workload is not manageable, you should consult your Academic Advisor. If you are considering reducing your workload by dropping one or more courses, this must be done by the appropriate deadlines. Please refer to the Advising website, https://huronatwestern.ca/student-life/student-services/academic-advising/ or review the list of official Sessional Dates on the Academic Calendar, available here: http://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/SessionalDates.cfm.

You should consult with the course instructor and the Academic Advisor who can help you consider alternatives to dropping one or more courses. Note that dropping a course may affect OSAP and/or Scholarship/Bursary eligibility.

Huron University College Student Council: https://huronatwestern.ca/student-life/beyond-classroom/hucsc/
Western USC: http://westernusc.ca/your-services/#studentservices

Wellness and Health Supports at Huron and Western

University students may encounter setbacks from time to time that can impact academic performance. Huron offers a variety of services that are here to support your success and wellbeing. All Huron staff and faculty have received training on responding to disclosures of Gender-Based Sexual Violence (GBSV); students should know that the Community Safety Office is a resource for survivors, providing support and, if desired, guidance while referring them to the further supports that they may require. Please visit https://huronatwestern.ca/student-life-campus/student-services/wellness-safety for more information or contact staff directly:

Wellness Services:
huronwellness@huron.uwo.ca Community
Safety Office: safety@huron.uwo.ca

Additional supports for Health and Wellness may be found and accessed at Western through, https://www.uwo.ca/health/.

Western Calendar - Policy Pages -
Academic Calendar - Western University (uwo.ca)