

HUMOR IN 20TH CENTURY JEWISH LITERATURES, CULTURES, IDENTITIES

What you will find in this syllabus:

- **Professor and Class Information:** how, where and when you can be in touch with Dr. Valles and where and when you should show up for class.
- **Focus Statement:** what the course is all about.
- **Rights and Responsibilities:** what you can expect from me and what I expect from you with regard to this syllabus.
- **Goals:** what are the goals of IAH courses; what skills, knowledge bases and attitudes this course will help you develop.
- **Required Texts & Tech:** what texts and technology I expect you to obtain for this course.
- **Grading:** how I will weigh the various components and assignments of this course for the determination of your grade.
- **Description of Assignments:** A brief account of what is expected from you for each of the assignments.
- **Course Schedule:** a week-by-week plan of what will be covered.
- **Policy Statements:** how I am fulfilling the goals of the university, the college and CIS-AH; what you are responsible for; what I am responsible for.



PROFESSOR

INFORMATION:

Dr. Margot B. Valles

vallesm@msu.edu

212 Linton Hall
479 W. Circle Dr.
East Lansing, MI
48824

Office Hours held:

Tuesdays & Thursdays 12:30 pm - 2:15 pm and by appointment

CLASS INFORMATION

Tuesdays, 3:00 pm - 4:50 pm

C135 Holden Hall and Online

<https://d2l.msu.edu/d2l/home/316266>

FOCUS STATEMENT:

This course will conceptualize both the definition and role of “Jewish humor.” We will look at the notion of “Jewish humor” through a variety of lenses, focusing mostly on the following questions: What role does humor play in Jewish literatures, cultures and identities? What do we mean when we talk about “Jewish humor”? Is this category bound to the modern age or does it have roots in the pre-modern? Is it still a viable/useful category in post-modern, twenty-first century comedy? These questions will be explored through the written word, film, tv, and stand-up.

RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

I am responsible for distributing this syllabus and all future changes in a timely way. I reserve the right to alter this syllabus, especially the assignments and schedule portions of the syllabus, throughout the semester. You are responsible for reading, retaining and complying with the

information contained herein and any updates to this syllabus.

REQUIRED TEXTS AND TECH:

To successfully complete this class, you will need to have access to the following texts, technologies and resources. You may obtain any edition of the texts listed here. All other required texts will be provided via D2L on a weekly basis.

- Avner, Z., Ed. (1998). *Jewish Humor*. New Brunswick, Transaction Publishers. Print or Digital (ebook available on Google Books for \$9.99 (books.google.com)).
- Roth, P. *The Breast*. Vintage, 1994. Check it out here: <http://www.amazon.com/The-Breast-Philip-Roth/dp/0679749012>.
- Our Course Pack. This is available digitally through a link on our D2L page.
- A computer with a great, ideally wired (not wireless), internet connection (especially good for streaming course films).
- A word processor/office suite that allows you to upload files to the D2L dropbox in .doc, .docx, .rtf, .txt, .pdf file types. I will not accept files submitted as .pages. There are lots of great free office suites, if you don't feel like shelling out the dough for Microsoft office that will allow you to save word files in any of these formats (including the Pages program/app). Let me know if you want suggestions for a good, free, office suite.
- We will be using Eli Review, an online peer review service in this course. That means that eventually you will need to have an account with them—but no rush: you'll get a special access code for this course later in the semester.
- I also STRONGLY recommend signing on to one or more video streaming services. While Netflix has many of the movies we'll be watching, Amazon's streaming video service (available with Amazon Prime) has almost all of them. Many movies we'll be watching can be found in local libraries and at the MSU library, and at video rental locations—on the other hand, you will be at the mercy of other clients, so I recommend you obtain digital/streaming versions.

GOALS:

Integrative Studies in the Arts and Humanities at MSU seeks to assist students to become more familiar with ways of knowing in the arts and humanities and to be more knowledgeable and capable in a range of intellectual and expressive abilities. IAH courses encourage students to engage critically with their own society, history, and culture(s); they also encourage students to learn more about the history and culture of other societies. They focus on key ideas and issues in human experience; encourage appreciation of the roles of knowledge and values in shaping and understanding human behavior; emphasize the responsibilities and opportunities of democratic citizenship; highlight the value of the creative arts of literature, theater, music, and arts; and alert us to important issues that occur among peoples in an increasingly interconnected, interdependent world.

Student learning outcomes:

- Students will become familiar with new ways of “knowing in the arts and humanities” through the study of texts from a range of cultural, historical and artistic categories.
- Students will become knowledgeable in the long 20th century's tropes, media and history of “Jewish Humor.”

- Students will increase their appreciation for the “value of the creative arts” by exploring the idea of “Jewish Humor” across literature, stand-up, TV, and film.
- Students will “engage critically with their own society, history and culture(s)” as well as the cultures of other societies by examining the uses, abuses and challenges and benefits of categories like “Jewish Humor.”
- Students will demonstrate critical engagement in the “responsibilities and opportunities of democratic citizenship” through the interactive component of the discussion forum, peer review and a shared glossary.
- Students will develop their skills of sustained critical thinking through the writing of periodic essays and their final paper.
- Students will continue to improve the writing skills they developed in their Tier I writing classes through extensive feedback from peers and from me, with opportunity for revision and through consistent writing in their journals.

GRADING:

Assignments:	Percentage of Final Grade:
Attendance and Participation (mid-semester update)	10%
Weekly Journal Entries (Collected twice for 7.5% each)	15%
Sounding Boards (SB)	15%
Discussion Forums (DF)	16%
Critical Essays (Crit 1=8%, 2=12% each, Crit 3=15%)	35%
Crit 3 Proposal, Feedback/Revisions	9%

Course Grades:

- 4.0 = 90-100%
- 3.5 = 85-89%
- 3.0 = 80-84%
- 2.5 = 75-79%
- 2.0 = 70-74%
- 1.5 = 65-69%
- 1.0 = 60-64%
- 0 = <60%

DESCRIPTION OF ASSIGNMENTS:

Attendance and Participation

Attendance at all course sessions is mandatory—especially since we will only be meeting in person 15 times this semester before the final exam session. I also expect a high level of participation in course discussions. If you are shy or uncomfortable speaking up in class, it will be important for you to communicate with me regularly to maintain participation points. At the semester midpoint I will let you know how you are doing, but please check with me if you are concerned.

Weekly Journal

Your weekly running journal is worth 15% of your final grade. I will be collecting it twice during the semester and you should have a journal entry for each week of the course. I will not be grading the journal based on grammar, but rather to see whether you’ve been thinking about the course material on a regular basis and in a critical way. Keeping the journal should be a straightforward way of gaining points in this class. Feel free to write about any thoughts, feelings, ideas, connections you find yourself

having/making to our course material. A good prompt for an entry might be: What did I find interesting/important/strange or troubling in this week's readings/videos/websites? You may use any program you like to contain your journal (but please don't upload as a .pages file). Journals should be uploaded to the appropriate D2L dropbox at the semester midpoint and on the Monday of Finals Week.

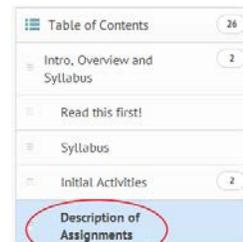
Sounding Boards:

Sounding Boards are worth 15% of your final grade and their point value will be evenly distributed across all boards. Sounding Boards are not discussions. Rather, in the sounding board assignment you will post a public answer to a prompt related to our studies. This is proof that you've been doing the readings and thinking deeply about our course topics. You will not be able to see other students' responses until you've posted your own. As mentioned above, sometimes you will be asked to vote on the post that you like the most.

Discussion Forums:

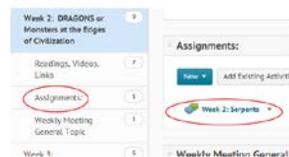
Discussion forums are worth 16% of your final grade and their point value will be evenly distributed across all discussions.

In any given discussion forum, you will be asked to respond to BOTH a prompt AND your peers. If you are first to post, you are only evaluated on the quality of your response to the prompt. For everyone else, it is necessary to respond to both the prompt and peers to get full credit. Posts will be evaluated on 1) how thoughtful/thought-provoking they are; 2) how well they move the conversation FORWARD; 3) how well they demonstrate knowledge and understanding regarding our course texts and themes.

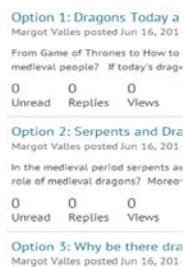


To complete a discussion forum, follow the following steps:

Step 1: Choose the right Unit and Week from the tabs on the left. Click on "Assignments" then click on the appropriate link with the speaking bubbles in the main window.



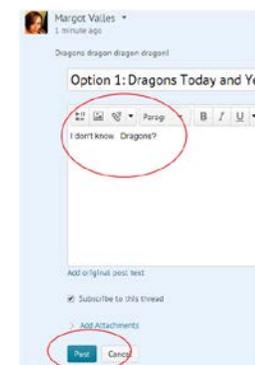
Step 2: Read your options and select the option that interests you the most.



Step 3: Read all posted responses to your chosen option.



Step 4: Compose and post a response.



Critical Essays:

You will be asked to write 3 critical essays. The first essay is worth 8%, the second essay is worth 12% and need only be 3-4 pages (around 900-1200 words). Their due dates are listed in the course schedule, below. You will receive feedback from me on those first two essays. This feedback should help you hone your work so that your final essay will be spectacular.

Your final critical essay will due during finals week and should be 5-7 pages (around 1500-2100 words). This last essay will be worth 15% of your final grade.

Completing this assignment will provide you with even more opportunity for feedback and revision.

For an in-depth account of what I am looking for in a “critical essay,” please see the appropriate document under the “Description of Assignments” tab under “Overview...” on D2L. In these essays you will be graded on your ability to 1) construct a non-obvious, arguable thesis or claim; 2) to support that claim using appropriate resources; 3) to explain why your argument matters.

Crit 3 Proposal, Feedback/Revisions:

Before your final Critical Essay is due, you will have numerous opportunities for revision. You will be asked to submit a Crit 3 proposal one week before the end of Unit 3. You will receive my feedback on that proposal during the last week of Unit 3. That means that during Unit 4, you will be ready to work on your Crit 3. Soon after Unit 4 begins, you will be assigned peer review groups that will provide additional feedback to you on your drafts. You will be graded on the feedback you give and how you implement the feedback that you receive.

The proposal will be worth 3% of your course grade. The feedback given and implementation of feedback received will also be worth 6% of your course grade.

POLICY STATEMENTS:

Academic Integrity:

In accordance with MSU’s policies on “Protection of Scholarship and Grades” and “Integrity of Scholarship and Grades,” students are expected to honor principles of truth and honesty in their academic work. Academic honesty entails, among other things, that students will not plagiarize. This means (1) students will not submit someone else’s work as their own (e.g. they will not submit another student’s paper etc., nor will they hand in a paper copied from the web or another published source). Academic honesty also means students (2) will not knowingly permit another student to copy and submit their work as that student’s own and (3) will not use unacknowledged quotations or paraphrases as part of their work. As provided by university policy, such academic dishonesty or plagiarism may be penalized by a failing grade on the assignment or for the course. Failure in a course as a result of academic dishonesty will also result in written notification to the student’s academic dean of the circumstances. Additional discussion of academic integrity is available on the Ombudsman’s webpage at <https://www.msu.edu/~ombud/academic-integrity/index.html>.

Therefore, unless otherwise authorized, you are expected to complete all course assignments, including homework, quizzes, tests and exams, and essays without assistance from any source. You are expected to develop original work for this course; therefore, you may not submit course work you completed for another course to satisfy the requirements for this course. Also, you are not authorized to use the www.allmsu.com Web site to complete any course work in this course. Students who violate MSU rules may receive a penalty grade, including but not limited to a failing grade on the assignment or in the course.

Late Work:

I reserve the right to determine if I will or will not accept late work on a case by case basis. If I do accept your late work, I will decide in consultation with you what sort of penalty late work will receive.

Turnitin OriginalityCheck on D2L Dropboxes:

Consistent with MSU's efforts to enhance student learning, foster honesty, and maintain integrity in our academic processes, instructors may use a tool in D2L called Turnitin OriginalityCheck to compare a student's work with multiple sources. The tool compares each student's work with an extensive database of prior publications and papers, providing links to possible matches and a "similarity score." The tool does not determine whether plagiarism has occurred or not. Instead, the instructor must make a complete assessment and judge the originality of the student's work. All submissions to this course may be checked using this tool. Students should submit assignments to be screened by OriginalityCheck without identifying information included in the assignment (e.g., the student's name, PID, or NetID); the system will automatically show identifying information to the course faculty when viewing the submissions, but this information will not be retained by Turnitin.

SIRS Evaluation Policy:

Michigan State University takes seriously the opinion of students in the evaluation of the effectiveness of instruction and has implemented the Student Instructional Rating System (SIRS) to gather student feedback (<https://sirsonline.msu.edu>). This course utilizes the online SIRS system, and you will receive an e-mail during the last two weeks of class asking you to fill out the SIRS web form at your convenience. In addition, participation in the online SIRS system involves grade sequestration, which means that the final grade for this course will not be accessible on STUINFO during the week following the submission of grades for this course unless the SIRS online form has been completed. Alternatively, you have the option on the SIRS website to decline to participate in the evaluation of the course. We hope, however, that you will be willing to give us your frank and constructive feedback so that we may instruct students even better in the future. If you access the online SIRS website and complete the online SIRS form or decline to participate, you will receive the final grade in this course as usual once final grades are submitted.

Disabilities Policy:

I care deeply about making my classroom as inclusive as possible, not only in terms of recognizing and accommodating cultural diversity but also with regard to accommodating a range of learning needs based on physical and mental conditions. Please, let me and the Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities know, as soon as possible, if you have a disability that requires accommodation. Also, please let me know if you have needs which are not being met. If you need suggestions for resources on campus, you can ask me, go to the Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities (Bessey Hall 120), or meet with a counselor (call 517-353-9642; or 517-3555-1293 (TTY)). It is Michigan State University's policy to not discriminate against qualified students with documented disabilities in its educational programs.

Student Resources:

The Writing Center (is awesome! And,) offers students an opportunity to meet one-on-one with a consultant while they are engaged in the process of writing class papers and other documents. It also offers consulting on digital writing projects and a Grammar Hotline. The Writing Center is located in 300 Bessey Hall. For information about appointments and satellite locations, see <http://writing.msu.edu/>.

The ESL Writing Lab will assist international students with all aspects of their work in IAH courses, including understanding of course readings to be used in writing papers, planning and revising papers, and proofreading. See <http://elc.msu.edu/esl-lab/> for more information and instructions on making appointments. *The Learning Resource Center*, located in Bessey Hall 202, offers academic support seminars and workshops, consults with students about study and learning styles and time management, and provides one-on-one tutoring in such areas as critical reading. For a more detailed description of LRC services and hour, see <http://lrc.msu.edu/>.

COURSE SCHEDULE:*

Week and Meeting Dates	To Read (before class)	Graded Assignments with due dates
Unit 1: Pre-20th and Early 20th Century		
Week 1 Meeting: January 12	The Syllabus; Sholem Aleichem "On Account of a Hat" (CP) Avner Ziv, "Introduction" (JH)	Sounding Board 1 Weekly Journal Entry Due: Friday, Jan 15
Week 2 January 19	Ruth Adler, "On Account of a Hat" (JH) Israel Zangwill, "The King of the Schnorrers" (CP) Irving Howe, "The Nature of Jewish Laughter" (CP)	Discussion Forum 1 Weekly Journal Entry Due: Friday, Jan 22
Week 3 January 26	Selections from Sigmund Freud's "On Wit" (CP) Stories and Folktales (CP) Marx "We were Brothers..." Link on D2L	Discussion Forum 2 Weekly Journal Entry Due: Friday, Jan 29
Week 4 February 2	Grotjahn "Beyond Laughter" (CP) "Jewish Humor" from <i>Jewish Wry</i> (CP) Telushkin "Jewish Humor" (CP) <i>Duck Soup!</i>	Sounding Board 2 Weekly Journal Entry Due: Friday, Feb 5
Unit 2: Mid-20th Century & Holocaust Humor		
Week 5 February 9	Pinsker, "The Instruments..." PDF on D2L Dorinson "The Jew as Comic" (JH) <i>The Producers</i>	Critical Essay 1 Weekly Journal Entry Due: Sunday, Feb 14
Week 6 February 16	Mintz, L. "The Rabbi vs. The Priest" (JH) Alter, R. "JH and The Domestication of Myth" (CP) Allen, W. "The Scrolls" & "No Kaddish for Weinstein" (CP) <i>Bananas!</i>	Sounding Board 3 Weekly Journal Entry Due: Friday, Feb 19
Week 7 February 23	Phillip Roth, <i>The Breast</i> <i>Annie Hall</i>	Journal Entries 1-7 Due Journal Entry Due: Sunday, Feb 28
Week 8 March 1	Susan Gubar, "Racial Camp" (CP) Goldman, W. "Introduction" <i>The Princess Bride</i> , D2L <i>Blazing Saddles</i>	Discussion Forum 3 Weekly Journal Entry Due: Friday, March 4
March 8	SPRING BREAK!	

* I highly recommend printing this page and posting it in a place where you'll be able to easily refer to it (probably near your computer or where you do most of your work). This information will also be available to you in other formats on D2L.

Unit 3: The 1970s and 1980s		
Week 9 March 15	Boskin and Dorinson, "Ethnic Humor" Link on D2L Ben Amos, "The Myth of Jewish Humor" Link on D2L <i>The Frisco Kid</i>	Discussion Forum 4 Weekly Journal Entry Due: Friday, March 18
Week 10 March 22	Kaplan, A. "The 1970s and the 1980s" link on D2L <i>When Harry Met Sally</i>	Critical Essay 2 Weekly Journal Entry Due: Sunday, March 27
Week 11 March 29	Fuchs, "Humor and Sexism" (JH) Gilbert, "Introduction" & "Chapter 1" (CP)	Sounding Board 4 Weekly Journal Entry Due: Friday, April 1
Week 12 April 5	TBA	Critical Essay 3 Proposal Weekly Journal Entry Due: Friday, April 8
Unit 4: Late 20 th Century and Beyond		
Week 13 April 12	TBA	Discussion Forum 5 Weekly Journal Entry Due: Friday, April 15
Week 14 April 19	TBA	Weekly Journal Entry Critical Essay 3, First Draft Due: Friday, April 22 First Peer Review Due: Sunday, April 24
Week 15 April 26	Reread: Avner Ziv, "Jewish Humor" (JH)	Sounding Board 5 Weekly Journal Entry Critical Essay 3, Second Draft Due: Friday, April 29 Second Peer Review Due: Sunday, May 1
Week 16 (Finals) May 2-May 6	Journal entries due (entries 8-15) Monday, May 2 at 11:59pm Critical Essay 3 (and relevant materials) due Wednesday, May 4 at 11:59pm	