

Michigan State University
Integrative Studies in the Arts and Humanities
IAH 211C Section 06 Spring 2016
Jewish American Culture
M W 3:00-4:50 p.m. 111 Bessey Hall
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Office Hours: M W 1:45-2:45 p.m. and by appointment (410 Erickson Hall)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Jewish American Culture (IAH 211C, Section 06) offers an introduction to the experiences of Jews in the United States. The course is organized historically, featuring the period of immigration of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century to our own time. With books, articles, documentary and dramatic films, and online resources, the course reflects the great variety in Jewish-American life. There are four thematic units: 1. *Immigrants East and West*; 2. *The Holocaust and After in Jewish American Experience*; 3. *Traveling Jews*; and 4. *Jewish American Culture in the Digital Age*.

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 activities of literature and the other arts; and alert us to important issues that occur among peoples in an increasingly interconnected, interdependent world.

For this course, primary “Learning Outcomes,” as identified in [MSU’s Undergraduate Learning Goals](#), and stipulated for any IAH syllabus, will be “Analytical Reasoning” and “Cultural Understanding.” The first is displayed in careful reading of print texts and online resources, viewing of films, and writing about them. The second is displayed in how the many course resources are integrated into a broadly based cultural view of Jewish American experience allowing for understanding of its place in the United States and the world.

REQUIRED BOOKS

Available in paperback editions at the Student Book Store on Grand River Avenue or online from amazon.com and other retailers.

Hasia Diner, *A New Promised Land: A History of Jews in America* (Oxford University Press)
 Calvin Trillin, *Messages from My Father* (Farrar, Straus, and Giroux)
 Julie Salamon, *Net of Dreams: A Family's Search for a Rightful Place* (Random House)
 Rodger Kamenetz, *The Jew in the Lotus: A Poet's Rediscovery of Jewish Identity in Buddhist India* (Harper)
 Ruth Behar, *Traveling Heavy: A Memoir Between Journeys* (Duke University Press)
 Jonathan Rosen, *The Talmud and the Internet: A Journey Between Worlds* (Picador)

OPTIONAL BOOKS

Available in paperback editions from amazon.com and other retailers.

Norman Solomon, *Judaism: A Very Short Introduction* (2nd Edition; Oxford University Press)
 Joyce Eisenberg and Ellen Scolnic, *Dictionary of Jewish Words* (Revised Edition; Jewish Publication Society)
 Gerald Graff and Kathy Birkenstein, *"They Say, I Say": The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing* (3rd Edition; Norton)

REQUIRED DOCUMENTARY AND DRAMATIC FILMS

All to be screened—whole or in part--in class and available, with some exceptions, at the Gerald Kline Digital and Multi Media Center at the MSU Library, 4th Floor West.

Hava Negila (Directed by Roberta Grossman)
Sweatshop Cinderella (Directed by Suzanne Wasserman)
Hester Street (Directed by Joan Micklin Silver)
West of Hester Street (Directed by Allen Mondell and Cynthia Salzman Mondell)
Yidl in the Middle (Directed by Marlene Booth)
Numbered (Directed by Dana Doran and Uriel Sinai)
The Last Days (Directed by James Moll)
Paper Clips (Directed by Elliot Berlin and Joe Fab)
The Chosen (Directed by Jeremy Kagan)
The Jew in the Lotus (Directed by Laurel Chiten)
Adio Kerida: Goodbye Dear Love (Directed by Ruth Behar)

EXPECTATIONS, EXAMS, AND GRADES

Students will be expected to prepare for, attend, and participate in class. *Preparation* constitutes reading the assigned texts (print or online) in the context of themes of the course as they are presented in class, and of earlier assignments. A sign in sheet will be circulated during each class session to record *attendance*. *Participation* means paying attention in class, asking questions, making points about texts, online resources and films, and contributing to the discussion. Laptops and smart phones (and other digital devices) must be put away during class, including the screening of films. *Preparation, attendance, and participation* will count 25% of the final grade according to these criteria:

- 4.0 Attendance at nearly every class, careful preparation, and regular contributions.
- 3.0 Occasional absences (2 or 3), careful preparation, and periodic contributions to class.
- 2.0 More than a few absences (4 or 5), casual preparation, infrequent contributions to class.
- 1.0 Irregular attendance (more than 5 absences), poor preparation, rare contributions to class.
- 0.0 Rare attendance, no preparation, no contributions to class.

There are four essay exams to be written at home, the last counting also as the final exam. An essay of approximately 500 words will be due at the end of each of the first three course units as named above. A fourth essay, of approximately 1,000 words, will be due at the end of the course. Questions for the essay exams will be posted at D2L several days before they are due. *Writing Assignments: A Guide* for IAH 211C is posted at the course's D2L site. Exam essays are to be submitted at the D2L Dropbox according to the deadlines identified in the Schedule below. They will be graded according to these criteria:

- 4.0 The essay is well organized for addressing the topic and selectively uses suitable evidence from course readings, films, online resources, and class discussion.
- 3.0 The essay is casually organized and inconsistent in attention to the topic with suitable selective evidence from course readings, films, online resources, and class discussion.
- 2.0 The essay is casually organized and inconsistent with attention to the topic with little evidence from course readings, films, online resources, and class discussion.
- 1.0 The essay shows few signs of being addressed to the topic and has no evidence from course resources.
- 0.0 No essay submitted.

Papers submitted after the due date are dropped .5 each day they are late. Weekend days count as days late. Papers will not be accepted beyond four days after the due date.

Plagiarism can result in a grade of 0.0 for a paper or in a grade of 0.0 for the class, depending on

the circumstances. DO NOT PLAGIARIZE.

The first three exam essays will each count for 15% of the course grade with the fourth counting 30%--a total of 75%. Final grades will reflect performance in preparation, attendance, and participation (25%) and the four essay exams (75%).

SCHEDULE

Note: Each class session is based on one or more texts, website resources, or a film. It will include remarks by the instructor and class discussion.

1. Monday, January 11 Course Introduction Review of the syllabus and course goals; Film viewing in class: *Hava Negila*

2. Wednesday, January 13 Readings, posted at D2L (as in subsequent weeks): Clay Shirky, “Why I Just Asked My Students to Put Their Laptops Away”; *The Economist*, “Judaism and the Jews: Alive and Well”; Pew Research Center, “A Portrait of Jewish Americans: Overview” (print report or video presentation); Peter Manseau, “Thou Shalt Worship None of the Above”; “Jewish Denominations” at *MyJewishLearning.com*.

Monday, January 18 No Class Martin Luther King Day

Immigrants East and West

3. Wednesday, January 20 Readings: Hasia Diner, *A New Promised Land: A History of the Jews in America*, pp. 1-68; Eduardo Porter, “For Immigrants, America is Still More Welcoming than Europe”; Website viewing at home: *From Haven to Home: 350 Years of Jewish Life in America* (Library of Congress); Film viewing in class: *The Jewish Journey: America*.

4. Monday, January 25 Readings: Anzia Yezierska, “How I Found America”; Emma Lazarus, “The New Colossus” (interactive version at D2L); Film viewing in class: *Imprisoned Lightening: Emma Lazarus and the Statue of Liberty* and *Sweatshop Cinderella*; Website viewing at home: National Yiddish Book Center.

5. Wednesday, January 27 Reading: Michael Walzer, “What Does it Mean To Be An American?”; Film viewing in class: Excerpts from *Hester Street*; Website viewing at home: Lower East Side Tenement Museum (Virtual Tour).

6. Monday, February 1 Hasia Diner, *A New Promised Land*, 69-92. Calvin Trillin, *Messages from My Father*, pp. 3-59; Batsheva Pomerantz, “Catching Up with the Galveston Movement”; Film viewing in class: *West of Hester Street*.

7. Wednesday, February 3 Readings: Calvin Trillin, *Messages from My Father*, pp. 60-111; David Brooks, “ ‘The Chosen’: Getting In”; Charles Fernyhough, “The Story of the Self.”

8. Monday, February 8 Reading: Calvin Trillin, “In Defense of the True ‘Cue’ ”; Website viewing at home: *BBQ Jew*; Film viewing in class: *Yidl in the Middle*.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 9: FIRST ESSAY EXAM DUE

The Holocaust and After in Jewish-American Experience

9. Wednesday, February 10 Website viewing at home: “Introduction to the Holocaust,” including the film “The Path to Nazi Genocide” at site of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM); Film viewing in class: *Numbered*.

10. Monday, February 15 Julie Salamon, *Net of Dreams: A Family’s Search for a Rightful Place*, pp. 3-147.

11. Wednesday, February 17 Reading: Julie Salamon, *Net of Dreams*, pp. 148-210; Website viewing at home: *Life Reborn: Jewish Displaced Persons, 1945-1951*, an online exhibit at the website of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum

12. Monday, February 22 Reading: Julie Salamon, *Net of Dreams*, pp. 211-336.

13. Wednesday, February 24 Film viewing in class: *The Last Days*.

14. Monday, February 29 Readings: Erika Apfelbaum, “And Now What, After Such Tribulations?: Memory and Dislocation in the Era of Uprooting”; Anthony Faiola, Ruth Eglash, and Michelle Borstein, “The Voices of Auschwitz.”

15. Wednesday, March 2 Film viewing in class: *Paper Clips*.
Second Essay Exam Due

FRIDAY, MARCH 4: SECOND ESSAY EXAM DUE

March 7-11 Spring Break

16. Monday, March 14 Reading: Hasia Diner, *A New Promised Land*, pp. 93-116; Film viewing in class: *The Chosen*.

Traveling Jews

17. **Wednesday, March 16** Readings: Hasia Diner, *A New Promised Land*, pp. 117-139; Rodger Kamenetz, *The Jew in the Lotus: A Poet's Discovery of Jewish Identity in Buddhist India*, pp. 1-71, 109-116.
18. **Monday, March 21** Readings: Rodger Kamenetz, *The Jew in the Lotus*, pp. 128-157, 170-183; Christine Meilicke, "Jewish Counterculture."
19. **Wednesday, March 23** Reading: Rodger Kamenetz, *The Jew in the Lotus*, pp. 226-321; Film viewing in class: *The Jew in the Lotus*.
20. **Monday, March 28** Reading: Shaul Magid, "Jewish Renewal in America"; Video viewing at home: National Museum of Jewish American History, *The Jew in the Lotus—25 Years After the Journey* and National Geographic, *The Secret World of Hasidism*.
21. **Wednesday, March 30** Readings: Ruth Behar, *Traveling Heavy: A Memoir Between Journeys*, pp. 3-45.
22. **Monday, April 4** Readings: Ruth Behar, *Traveling Heavy*, pp. 117-154; Excerpts from Ruth Behar, *An Island Called Home: Returning to Jewish Cuba*.
23. **Wednesday, April 6** Readings: Ruth Behar, *Traveling Heavy*, pp. 157-187; Josh Nathan-Kazis, "Can Sephardic Jews Go Home Again—500 Years After the Inquisition?"; Rachel Benaim, "I Went to India, and I Found 'Shanti'."
- Sunday, April 10 7:00 p.m. Kellogg Center Auditorium** 24th Annual David and Sarah Rabin Lecture on the Holocaust: Deborah Lipstadt, Dorot Professor of Modern Jewish and Holocaust Studies, Emory University: "Anti-Semitism in the 21st Century: An Illusion? Or, Time to Start Worrying?"
24. **Monday, April 11** Film viewing in Class: *Adio Kerida: Goodbye Dear Love*.

TUESDAY, MAY 12 THIRD ESSAY EXAM DUE

Jewish-American Culture in the Digital Age

25. **Wednesday, April 13** Readings: Jonathan Rosen, *The Talmud and the Internet: A Journey Between Worlds*, pp. 3-66; Adin Steinsaltz, "What is the Talmud?"; William Kremer, "The

Talmud: Why Has a Jewish Law Book Become So Popular?"; Video viewing at home: "Profile of Adin Steinsaltz."

26. **Monday, April 18** Reading: Jonathan Rosen, *The Talmud and the Internet*, pp. 69-132.

27. **Wednesday, April 20** Readings: Judith Shulevitz, *The Sabbath World: Glimpses of a Different Order of Time*, pp. 3-58; Roger Cohen, "Jews as Far as Possible"; Mark Taylor, "Speed Kills: Fast is Never Enough."

28. **Monday, April 25** Readings: Judith Shulevitz, *The Sabbath World: Glimpses of a Different Order of Time*, pp. 188-217; Uri Friedman, "People of the e-Book Observant Jews Struggle with Sabbath in a Digital Age"; Listening at home: National Public Radio interview with Judith Shulevitz.

29. **Wednesday, April 27** Readings: "Symposium: *Moment Magazine* Asks 35 American Jews Two Big Questions"; Shaul Magid, "Be the Jew You Make: Jews, Judaism, and Jewishness in Post-Ethnic America"; Leon Wieseltier, "A Universal Jewishness"; Film viewing in Class: "Jewish Life Today" from *The Jewish Americans* (PBS).

MONDAY, MAY 2: FINAL ESSAY EXAM DUE

COURSE EVALUATION

Like all IAH courses, this course uses the online Student Instructional Rating System (SIRS) to gather student feedback (<http://rateyourclass.msu.edu/>). 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.

Participation in the online SIRS system 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. You have the option on the SIRS website to decline to participate in the evaluation of the course. I do hope, however, that you will be willing to give constructive feedback—constructive criticism is a great aid to me in helping to improve my class. Once you access the online SIRS website and either 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.

NOTE TO STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Michigan State University is committed to providing equal opportunity for participation in all programs, services and activities. Requests for accommodations by persons with disabilities may be made by contacting the Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities at 517-884-RCPD or on

the web at rcpd.msu.edu. Once your eligibility for an accommodation has been determined, you will be issued a Verified Individual Services Accommodation ("VISA") form. Please present this form to me at the start of the term and/or two weeks prior to the accommodation date (test, project, etc.). Requests received after this date may not be honored.