

Jewish Storytelling: From the Russian Shtetl to New York

Professor Brett Kaplan

YDSH 220, CWL 221, ENGL, 223, RLST 220; SPRING 2006

Tu/Th 10-11:20; 186 Lincoln Hall

Office Hours: Tuesdays 1-3 or by appointment, 3123 FLB

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This course satisfies the Literature and the Arts, and the Western Comparative Culture requirements

This course examines various kinds of Jewish Storytelling, from Yiddish short stories (in translation), to films, to American novels, to French graphic novels (in translation). The course hopes to teach students about the rich variety of Jewish literature and Jewish history. A discussion based course, students will participate in a series of in-class exercises designed to encourage student input in the learning process.

Required Texts: Irving Howe and Eliezer Greenberg, eds., *A Treasury of Yiddish Stories*; Sandra Bark, ed., *Beautiful as the Moon, Radiant as the Stars: Jewish Women in Yiddish Stories*; Steve Stern, *The Angel of Forgetfulness*; Philip Roth, *American Pastoral*; Joann Sfar, *The Rabbi's Cat*; course reader available at Notes-n-Quotes (502 East John Street). Films: *Yentl* (1983) starring and directed by Barbara Streisand and *Divan* (2004) by Pearl Gluck.

Course Requirements: Active participation in class discussions is required, and students will write three papers. I will hand out a detailed essay prompt one week before each peer-editing session. The first essay (4 pages) is worth 15% of your grade for the semester. The second essay (5 pages) is worth 30%, and the final essay (7 pages) is worth 35%. 15% of your final grade is class participation and attendance, and the remaining 5% is derived from peer-editing. If the first two papers are late they will be marked down 10%; the latest they may be turned in is one week after the due date. The final paper must be turned in on time so that grades can be turned in on time (if you would like your final paper returned to you, please include a stamped-self-addressed envelope). Papers must be delivered by hand: emailed or faxed papers are not acceptable.

Web resources:

<http://www.yivoinstitute.org/>

<http://www.yiddishbookcenter.org/>

<http://www.forward.com/>

Encyclopedia Judaica (available in paper and online in the main library reference room)

Course Schedule

Week One:

Tuesday 1/17 Introduction

Thursday 1/19 Katz, *Words on Fire* 1-9; 173-223 (in reader)

Week Two

Tuesday 1/24 Katz, *Words on Fire* 349-397 (in reader)

Thursday 1/26 I.L. Peretz from *Treasury*, “Bontsha the Silent” 223-230; “The Golem” 245-246; from Reader: “The Shabbes Goy”;
from *Beautiful as the Moon*, “Bryna’s Mendl” 259-268

Week Three

Tuesday 1/31 Isaac Babel, “Italian Sunshine,” and “Life and Adventures of Matvey Pavlitchenko,” from *Red Cavalry* (in reader);
Elif Batuman, “Babel in California” (in reader)

Thursday 2/2 Isaac Bashevis Singer: from *Treasury*: “Gimpel the Fool” 401-414; from *Beautiful as the Moon*, “Yentl the Yeshiva Boy” 101-130; from Reader: Stavans, “Singer’s Typewriter...& Mine;” Seidman, “Who’s the Fool?”

Week Four

Tuesday 2/7 film: *Yentl* screened in Comparative Literature Library, 3024 FLB during class

Thursday 2/9 Sholem Aleichem: from *Treasury*, “Hodel” 168-182; “The Search” 182-187; “Dreyfus in Kasrilevke” 187-192; “On Account of A Hat” 111-118; Mendele Mocher Sforim, “The Calf” 97-111; first essay prompt handed out

Week Five

Tuesday 2/14 IN CLASS PEER EDITING: DRAFT OF FIRST PAPER DUE

Thursday 2/16 FIRST PAPER DUE IN MY OFFICE DURING CLASS TIME

Week Six

Tuesday 2/21 Sholem Aleichem, “Tevye Strikes it Rich,” “Tevye Blows a Small Fortune,” “Today’s Children,” from Hillel Halkin’s translation of *Tevye the Dairyman* (3-52, in reader). Guest Speaker Hillel Halkin

Thursday 2/23 Steve Stern, *The Angel of Forgetfulness*, 1-107

Week Seven

Tuesday 2/28 Steve Stern, *The Angel of Forgetfulness*, 108-227

Thursday 3/2 Steve Stern, *The Angel of Forgetfulness*, 228-404

Week Eight

Tuesday 3/7 Irena Klepfisz: from Reader, "Secular Jewish Identity: *Yidishkayt* in America"; "Di rayze aheym/The Journey Home"; "Etlekhe verter oyf mame-loshn"; selections from *A Few Words in the Mother Tongue*; second essay prompt handed out

Thursday 3/9 Celia Dropkin: from *Beautiful as the Moon*: "At the Rich Relatives" 55-74; "Bella Fell in Love" 211-232; from Reader: "A Dancer"; selections from *Jewish American Literature*

Week Nine

Tuesday 3/14 IN CLASS PEER EDITING: DRAFT OF SECOND PAPER DUE

Thursday 3/16 SECOND PAPER DUE IN MY OFFICE DURING CLASS TIME

Week Ten

Spring Break

Week Eleven

Tuesday 3/28 Kadya Molodowsky: from Reader, "Women-Poems"; "Olke"; "The Lost Shabbes"; from *Beautiful as the Moon*, "The Fourth Mitzvah" 303-308; final essay prompt handed out

Thursday 3/30 film: *Divan*, screened in Comparative Literature Library, 3024 FLB during class

Week Twelve

Tuesday 4/4 Philip Roth, *American Pastoral*, 3-113

Thursday 4/6 Philip Roth, *American Pastoral*, 117-281

Week Thirteen

Tuesday 4/11 Philip Roth, *American Pastoral*, 285-336

Thursday 4/13 Philip Roth, *American Pastoral*, 337-423

Week Fourteen

Tuesday 4/18 Joann Sfar, *The Rabbi's Cat*;

Thursday 4/20 Joann Sfar, *The Rabbi's Cat*;

Week Fifteen

Tuesday 4/25 IN CLASS PEER EDITING: DRAFT OF FINAL PAPER DUE

Thursday 4/27 FINAL PAPER DUE IN MY OFFICE DURING CLASS TIME