

**LTGR 250/JWST 300: Between “Shtetl” and “Stadt”:
Places and Spaces in Yiddish and Jewish German Writing
T/R: 10:50am-12:05pm RSS 249**

Instructor: Corey L. Twitchell
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Office Hours: M 1:00-3:00pm, R 2:00-3:00pm, and by appointment
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Course Description:

How have central and Eastern European Jews as a minority grappled with the complexities of identity throughout European history? How have languages such as German and Yiddish and literature served as sites for exploring and mediating Jewish identity? How have space and place, such as the city (*Stadt*) and the village (*shtetl*) contributed to this negotiation? From the outside, Jews are routinely associated with the city and are often labeled a “cosmopolitan” and “urbane” group. However, the stereotype of Jews as quintessential city-dwellers is fraught with contradictions. At times, European Jews have been marginalized and forced to inhabit either the isolated *shtetl* or the intra-city *ghetto*. Throughout Central and Eastern Europe, including Germany, Austro-Hungary, Poland, and the Ukraine, Jews have in fact inhabited everything from rural villages to medium-sized cities to bustling urban centers such as Berlin, Vienna, Warsaw, and Kiev. This diversity of location and space is also reflected in the literature penned by Central and Eastern European Jews. In this course we will explore how German-Jewish, Austrian-Jewish and Eastern European Jewish authors, originally writing in German and Yiddish, depict both rural landscapes and urban cityscapes in literary texts and how these depictions are interconnected with the struggles for emancipation, civil equality, religious freedom, and Jewish identity. We will investigate works in various literary genres by Sholem Aleichem, Berthhold Auerbach, Aizik-Meyer Dik, Heinrich Heine, Franz Kafka, Solomon Maimon, Israel Rabon, Joseph Roth, and Isaac Bashevis Singer. We will focus throughout the course on a variety of themes, including: the city vs. ghetto/*shtetl*, the urbane vs. the unsophisticated, tradition vs. modernity, freedom vs. alienation/isolation.

Gen Ed student learning Outcomes:

Student Learning Outcome 1: Students analyze how ideas are represented, interpreted or valued in various expressions of human culture.

Student Learning Outcome 2: Students examine relevant primary source materials as understood by the discipline and interpret the material in writing assignments (or alternatives that require equally coherent and sustained analysis).

Assessment of Learning Outcomes: These two learning outcomes will be assessed via an essay question on the in-class final exam. In this in-class essay, students will identify and describe two different primary sources (short stories, novels, autobiography, and poetry) and situate each work both generically and in its historical-cultural context, and then analyze and interpret how each work represents ideas and themes.

Course Goals:

Course participants will

1. be introduced to the historical and cultural landscape of German- and Yiddish-speaking Jews of central and Eastern Europe and attain an overview of European Jewish literature penned by authors writing in German and Yiddish.
2. learn to discuss and analyze literary texts through the lens of representations of urban and rural spaces.
3. learn to identify and examine basic principles of narrative and narration as they appear in literary texts.
4. reflect, via the encounter with German-Jewish, Austrian-Jewish, and Eastern European Jewish texts, upon the role of storytelling, cityscapes, and rural space in their own culture(s).

Course Grading:

Participation: 20%

Although this course will contain mini-lectures by the professor, at least half of each class session will consist of class and group discussions. Successful participants will

1. come to class prepared (have completed the readings for each day)
2. frequently contribute their own questions, reactions, summaries, opinions etc. to the discussion
3. encourage their fellow classmates to participate
4. pay attention and stay focused during class and respectfully listen when others are speaking.

Preparation: Reading Q&A's: 20%

In order to succeed in the course, it will be absolutely necessary to complete the readings and viewings listed before each class session. In order to encourage thoughtful preparation, we will make use of Reading Q&A's that will help guide your reading and stimulate engagement with the text. Over the course of the semester, you will be asked to complete a minimum of five (5) Reading Q&A's, to be turned in ON DAYS INDICATED ON THE SYLLABUS. If you wish to complete more than the requisite five, these will be tallied into your final grade as extra credit.

Note: Reading/Viewing/Homework assignments listed under a specific day in the syllabus should be completed by class time on that day.

Midterm Exam: 30%

The midterm exam will consist of multiple choice, short answer, and short essay questions on the material covered over the first half of the semester. In the short essay questions, students will be expected to apply terms, theories and ideas that we used in class discussions. The structure of the exam will be described more explicitly as it approaches, but the questions will be based on issues explicitly discussed and analytical strategies modeled in each class session.

Final Exam: 30%

The final exam will be similar in structure to the midterm exam and will cover material following the mid-term examination.

Attendance Policy:

Preparation and active participation comprise 40% of the final course grade and make attendance absolutely necessary. More than two unexcused absences will adversely affect your participation and preparation grade. If you cannot make it to class for a legitimate reason (illness, emergency, etc.), please inform me before class by email or phone (the same way you would inform your employer if you couldn't make it to work), otherwise I will not be able to excuse the absence. You may also need to obtain written documentation from the Office of the Associate Dean of Students. Forms available here:

<http://studentaffairs.cofc.edu/services/absence.php>

Academic Honor Code:

Lying, cheating, attempted cheating, and plagiarism are violations of the College Honor Code and will be dealt with as prescribed by the Honor Code System. You are expected to be aware of and abide by all provisions of the CofC Honor Code:

<http://jinr.people.cofc.edu/honorcode.pdf>

Students Needing Access Parity (SNAP):

If there is a student in this class who has a documented disability and has been approved to receive accommodations through SNAP Services, please feel free to come and discuss this with me during my office hours.

Required Texts:**Available at bookstore:**

Sholem Aleichem	<i>Tevye the Dairyman and Motl the Cantor's Son</i>
Israel Rabon	<i>The Street</i>
Joseph Roth	<i>Job</i>

Available through OAKS in PDF format:

Berthold Auerbach, excerpt from *Tales of Villages in the Black Forest*

Dovid Bergelson, "In a Backwoods Town"

Aizik-Meyer Dik, "The Panic, or the Town of Herres"

Heinrich Heine, "The Rabbi of Bacherach"

Franz Kafka, "The City Coat of Arms"

Solomon Maimon, excerpts from *An Autobiography*

Course Syllabus:

WEEK 1

Tuesday, August 19

Introduction to the Course: Why read German-Jewish, Austrian-Jewish, and Eastern European-Jewish Literature? What is a *shtetl*? Why cities?

Thursday, August 21

Introduction to the *Shtetl* and the City: Isaac Bashevis Singer

Read:

Isaac Bashevis Singer, "The Little Shoemakers" (OAKS)

WEEK 2

Tuesday, August 26

Yiddish Folklore and the *Shtetl*: Aizik-Meyer Dik

Read:

Aizik-Meyer Dik, "The Panic, or the Town of Herres," 158-175 (OAKS)

Thursday, August 28

The Jewish Enlightenment and the Wandering Self: Solomon Maimon Travels to Berlin (Part I)

Read:

Solomon Maimon, excerpts from *An Autobiography*, pp. 55-78 (OAKS)

Reading Q&A can be turned in!

WEEK 3

Tuesday, Sept. 2

Solomon Maimon (Part II)

Read:

Solomon Maimon, excerpts from *An Autobiography*, pp. 78-110 (OAKS)

Thursday, Sept. 4:

**Imagining the Ghetto and a Jewish Past:
German-Jewish Poet Heinrich Heine
(Part I)**

Read:

Heinrich Heine, "The Rabbi of Bacherach,"
pp. 3-23 (OAKS)
Reading Q&A can be turned in!

WEEK 4

Tuesday, Sept. 9:

Heinrich Heine (Part II)

Read:

Heinrich Heine, "The Rabbi of Bacherach,"
pp. 24-65 (OAKS)

Thursday, Sept. 11:

**The German Village as Site of Identity:
German-Jewish Popular Writer
Berthold Auerbach**

Read:

Berthold Auerbach, excerpt from "Tales of
Villages in the Black Forest" (OAKS)

Reading Q&A can be turned in!

WEEK 5

Tuesday, Sept. 16:

**From Russian *Shtetl* to American
Metropolis (and Ghetto?): Sholem
Aleichem's *Motl the Cantor's Son*
(Part I)**

Read:

Sholem Aleichem, *Motl the Cantor's Son*,
138-179

Reading Q&A can be turned in!

Thursday, Sept. 18:

No Class, Reading Day

WEEK 6

Tuesday, Sept. 23

Sholem Aleichem's *Motl the Cantor's Son* (Part II)

Read:

Sholem Aleichem, *Motl the Cantor's Son*,
180-234

Thursday, Sept. 25

Sholem Aleichem, *Motl the Cantor's Son* (Part III)

Read:

Sholem Aleichem, *Motl the Cantor's Son*,
pp. 235- 269

WEEK 7

Tuesday, Sept. 30

Sholem Aleichem, *Motl the Cantor's Son* (Part IV)

Read:

Sholem Aleichem, *Motl the Cantor's Son*,
pp. 270-326

Thursday, Oct. 2

Sholem Aleichem, *Motl the Cantor's Son* (Part V) and Review for Midterm!

Read:

Sholem Aleichem, *Motl the Cantor's Son*,
pp. 327-374 (the text ends with a fragment)

WEEK 8

Tuesday, Oct. 7

Midterm Examination!

Thursday, Oct. 9

Return to the *Shtetl*? Dovid Bergelson and Yiddish Modernism

Read:

Dovid Bergelson, "In A Backwoods Town"
(OAKS)

Reading Q&A can be turned in!

WEEK 9

Tuesday, Oct. 14

**Urban Dreams and Disappointments in
A Time of Upheaval: Israel Rabon and
the Interwar Years**

Read: Israel Rabon, *The Street*, pp. 1-64

Reading Q&A can be turned in!

Thursday, Oct. 16

Israel Rabon (Part II)

Read: Israel Rabon, *The Street*, pp. 65-87

WEEK 10

Tuesday, Oct. 21

Israel Rabon (Part III)

Read: Israel Rabon, *The Street*, pp. 88-134

Thursday, Oct. 23

Israel Rabon (Part IV)

Read: Israel Rabon, *The Street*, pp. 135-183

WEEK 11

Tuesday, Oct. 28

Franz Kafka (Re-) Imagines the City

Read: Franz Kafka, "The City Coat of Arms" (OAKS)

Reading Q&A can be turned in!

Thursday, Oct. 30

**Austrian-Jewish Writer Joseph Roth
and the Transformation of Central and
Eastern European Jewish Culture(s) in
the 20th Century**

Read: Joseph Roth, *Job*, pp. 9-42

Reading Q&A can be turned in!

WEEK 12

Tuesday, Nov. 4

Election Day: No Class (Reading Day)

Thursday, Nov. 6

Joseph Roth (Part II)

Read:

Joseph Roth, *Job*, pp. 42-89

WEEK 13

Tuesday, Nov. 11

Joseph Roth (Part III)

Read:

Joseph Roth, *Job*, pp. 90-137

Thursday, Nov. 13

Joseph Roth (Part IV)

Read:

Joseph Roth, *Job*, pp. 137-170

WEEK 14

Tuesday, Nov. 18

Joseph Roth (Part V)

Read:

Joseph Roth, *Job*, pp. 171-204

Thursday, Nov. 20

Writing Lab (Preparation for Final)

Read:

TBA

WEEK 15

Tuesday, Nov. 25

**Wrap-Up Discussion and Review for
Final Exam!**

Saturday, Dec. 6

Final Examination! Time: 8:00-11:00am
