

# SECULAR JEWISH CULTURE

Spring 2011

T: 11:45-1:40, R: 12:50-1:40

127 FAC

Instructor: Jack Kugelmass  
Office: 201 Walker Hall  
Hours: Wednesday 1:00-3:00  
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## Course Description:

In their encounter with modernity, Jews confronted unprecedented challenges that required them to redefine themselves in non-traditional ways. Central to this process of rearticulating Jewish identity was the production of a new body of Jewish texts remarkable in its heterogeneity. This class explores the key texts of Jewish culture as it developed outside the boundaries of religious life and forms. Throughout the course we read selections from a range of sources from within Jewish cultural environments in order to orient ourselves towards the various expressions of Jewish history, politics, literature, and art. No prior coursework is required.

## Objectives:

To introduce students to the depth and breadth of Jewish culture through key texts of modern Jewish historical, political, literary and artistic experience  
To engage in the study of Jewish society from an academic perspective  
To study the secular expressions of Jews in a variety of cultural contexts  
To investigate the diversity of Jewish strategies in acculturating and contributing to non-Jewish milieux  
To foster critical reading, writing and analytical skills

## Requirements:

**Attendance and Participation:** This seminar is designed to be highly participatory; students are expected to engage actively in class discussions at every meeting. Accordingly, attendance and participation in all aspects of this class are mandatory. Timely, thorough and careful reading of each day's assignment is a crucial element of participating thoughtfully and openly. Come to class ready to ask and answer questions related to the reading. Bring the reading with you to each class. In order to participate fully you must be present in both body and mind. Regular and lively participation by all students will make this class more interesting, entertaining, and valuable. Informed questions along with active discussions of class materials will factor into the evaluation of your participation grade. Because attendance has a direct impact on your participation, more than two unexcused absences will result in a lowering of your grade.

**Grading:** As a way of engaging more deeply with the themes and topics of this class, you will keep a journal in which to respond to the readings as well as the class discussions based upon those readings. Journal entries are due in class each Tuesday. Emailed attachments are not acceptable. Failure to complete any of the required assignments of the course will result in a lower grade. Attendance is taken at the beginning of each class. Two or more missed classes without written excuse will result in a lowered grade. Extra credit and/or make-up for missed classes can be done by attending and submitting a short written report on any of the JST sponsored public lectures. Check the JST web site ([www.jst.ufl.edu/events](http://www.jst.ufl.edu/events)) for the spring schedule of public lectures. New ones will be added throughout the semester so check periodically.

**Additional Note:** Please read and be familiar with the University of Florida's definition of and policy regarding plagiarism as described in the Code of Student Conduct. The first of many pages that outline students' responsibilities and obligations can be found at the following UF website. Please read it. <http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalog/policies/students.html>. Intentional plagiarism of any source will result in a failing grade for the course. If you do not understand plagiarism or what constitutes it, please ask.

If you have a disability that requires special arrangements (e.g., note- and/or test-taking), please register with UF's Office of Students with Disabilities and contact the instructor **within the first two weeks of class**. Every effort will be made to accommodate those with registered disabilities.

**N.B.:** Turn off all pagers, cell phones, wireless PDAs and other electronic communication devices before class. Anyone who wishes to take notes with a laptop must sit up front. I do check periodically and will eject anyone doing email or surfing the web during lectures and discussions.

Also, books are at the University book store and can also be ordered very cheaply on line. I'll be giving you shorter readings to go with some of the films. They'll either be hand outs or available on line.

## SYLLABUS

January 6: Introduction,

January 11 Screening: *Leon the Pig Farmer*

January 13 Screening: *The Tribe*, Discussion

January 18 (Robert Kawashima) Genesis 2,3 Gilgamesh

January 20 Genesis 2,3 Gilgamesh

January 25 Martin Goodman, *Rome and Jerusalem: the Clash of Ancient Civilizations*. Pp3-195.

January 27 Martin Goodman, *Rome and Jerusalem*

February 1 (Nina Caputo) Spain and Aftermath

February 3 Spain and Aftermath

February 8 (Dragan Kujundzic) Spinoza selected texts

February 10 Spinoza

February 15 Solomon Maimon, *An Autobiography*

February 17 *An Autobiography*

February 22 The Shtetl and Beyond selected texts

February 24 The Shtetl

March 1 Sholem Aleichem, *Tevye the Dairyman*

March 3 Sholem Aleichem, *Tevye the Dairyman*

March 8 Spring Break

March 10 Spring Break

March 15 (Eric Kligerman Kafka), selected texts

March 17 Selected texts

March 22 (Esther Romeyn) Abraham Cahan, *The Rise of David Levinsky*

March 24 *The Rise of David Levinsky*

March 29 Screening: *The Jazz Singer*

March 31 Readings: Michael Rogin, *Blackface, White Noise: Jewish immigrants in the Hollywood Melting Pot*. Pp73-121.

April 5 Howard Jacobson, *The Finkler Question*

April 7 *The Finkler Question*

April 12 Jewish Humor

April 14 Discussion

April 19 Passover