

SECULAR JEWISH CULTURE

Spring 2014

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

E220/221

Instructor: Jack Kugelmass

Office: 201 Walker Hall

Hours: Wednesday 1:00-3:00 or by appointment Tel. 2-9245

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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 many of these 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 in Jewish studies 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 milieus

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 with at least two prepared questions about the readings**, and ready to engage in further discussion. 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 (two to three pages) should briefly summarize

SYLLABUS

January 7, 9 Introduction

January 14, 16 Robert Kawashima, The Hebrew Bible (First three books of Genesis)

January 21, 23 Vassili Schedrin,
Fifth century BCE
Babylonian Exile: from geographic to cultural identity

January 28, 30 Vassili Schedrin,
Second century BCE
Hellenism: Jewish responses to external culture. A case of social fragmentation

February 4, 6 Martin Goodman, *Rome and Jerusalem: the Clash of Ancient Civilizations*.
Readings: Pp47-62; 97-108; 148-152; 155-195.

February 11, 13 Dragan Kujundzic, Spinoza (Selected Readings)

February 18, 20 The Haskalah
Israel Bartal, *The Jews of Eastern Europe, 1772-1881*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002, pp90-101.

February 25, 27 Solomon Maimon, *An Autobiography*

March 4, 6 Spring Break

March 11, 13 Sholem Aleichem, *Tevye the Dairyman*

March 18, 20 Screening: *East and West*
Reading: Jeffrey Shandler, "Ost und West, Old World and New: Nostalgia and Anti-Nostalgia on the Silver Screen." In *YIVO Annual*, Vol 2, 1993, pp153-188.

March 25, 27 Esther Romeyn
Reading: Abe Cahan, *The Rise of David Levinsky*

April 1, 3 Screening: Leon the Pig Farmer
Reading: Jack Kugelmass, "'I'm a Gentile!': Border Dramas and Jewish Continuity." In Goldberg, et. al. *Dynamic Belonging: Contemporary Jewish Collective Identities*, pp223-236.)

April 8, 10 Jewish Humor,

April 15, 17 No classes: Passover
Please make sure that you read Philip Roth, *Operation Shylock*

April 22 Lecture on *Operation Shylock*, Discussion and Summary