

ENGL 336/AMS 344 Jewish American Literature and Culture

Professor Cheryl Lester

AMS 344 Line # 67864

ENGL 336 Line #68450

Spring 2006 (Jewish Year 5766). Updated 1/22/06

Meets Tuesdays & Thursdays at 1 – 2:15 pm

212 Blake Hall

Office: 213 Bailey Hall

Office Hours: TW 3-4pm, F 9-11am

Course description: What does it mean to be Jewish in contemporary U.S. culture? And how can we address this question if the answers are multiple and vary according to region, generation, gender, class, sexual preference, religious belief, political affiliation, national origin(s), immigration history, family history, etc.? What historical and geopolitical contexts determine the meaning of being Jewish today in the United States or elsewhere? What role do literature and other cultural institutions play in the production, reproduction, and transformation of such meanings? How do these meanings circulate and how do ordinary people engage with them? Whose answers determine the meaning of American Jewishness? In what contexts? These are the major questions this course will address as we examine the role of literature and culture in the construction of social meanings about American Jewishness. To situate students actively within the ongoing process of producing, reproducing, and transforming the meanings of American Jewish identity, this course will require students to undertake a project on American Jewish identity grounded either in academic research or community service.

Course requirements: To succeed in this course, you need to attend class regularly and do the assigned reading, research, and writing faithfully and on time. To insure that you remain current with the reading, there will be ten in-class pop quizzes that will count for a total of ten per cent of your grade. I will not administer make-up quizzes. If you must miss a class meeting, you should contact a fellow student to find out what was covered in class. The final project will require a minimum of 20 hours of either text- or community-based research, and the latter must be completed no later than 2 May. Three short papers during the semester will enable you to report on the progress of your research and to get formal feedback and evaluation as you prepare to submit and present final papers toward the end of the semester.

Course texts: Required: Jules Chametzky, et al. *Jewish American Literature: A Norton Anthology* (2001). **Recommended:** Andrea A. Lunsford, *The Everyday Writer*, Third Edition. Boston, New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2005.

Course goals: At the end of the course a successful student will be able to:

- Analyse cultural representations of American Jewishness and recognize how they have shifted over time and across cultures.

- Critically view the process through which the meanings and values of Jewishness are produced and circulated in literature and in life.
- Recognize our role as agents in the production and circulation of meaning and values about Jewishness in American culture.

Course policies regarding the Submission and Evaluation of Papers: The format of your papers should follow the guidelines set forth in the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, Sixth Edition (2003). These guidelines are concisely illustrated in the sample student research essay printed in Andrea A. Lunsford's *Everyday Writer*, Third Edition (403-412). Because it contains essential and readily accessible information about the preparation and submission of student papers, *The Everyday Writer* is a recommended texts for students in KU English Department courses at or below the 300-level. Papers that contain numerous mechanical errors cannot be counted as excellent or very good. Be sure to revise and proofread your papers. I suggest that you work with the Writing Center and/or a writing partner or group to prepare writing for submission. I typically return graded papers 1-2 weeks after the due date. I do not accept late papers.

The following policy statements on plagiarism, writing assistance are largely borrowed from Dorice Elliott, Chairperson, English Department.

Plagiarism: Stealing and passing off as your own someone else's ideas or words, or using information from another's work without crediting the source, is called "plagiarism." Some specific examples of actions that constitute plagiarism include pasting together uncredited information or ideas from the Internet or published sources, submitting an entire paper written by someone else, submitting a paper written for another class (and thus not original work), and copying another student's work (even with the student's permission). In order to avoid unintentional plagiarism and to represent your work honestly, you will need to be meticulous about giving credit to any and all sources, whether directly quoted (even a few words) or paraphrased.

There will be a zero tolerance policy for any type of plagiarism in this class. All incidents of plagiarism will be penalized (you will fail the course), reported, and kept on file in the English Department, the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, and the University Provost's Office.

Writing Assistance: For help with your writing, I strongly encourage you to contact KU's writing centers, called Writer's Roosts. At a Writer's Roost you can talk about your writing with trained tutors or consult reference materials in a comfortable working environment. You may ask for feedback on your papers, advice and tips on writing (for all your courses), or for guidance on special writing tasks. Please check the website at <http://www.writing.ku.edu/students/> for current locations and hours. The Writing Center welcomes both drop-ins and appointments, and there is no charge for their services. For more information, please call 864-2399 or send an e-mail to writing@ku.edu. The website is loaded with helpful information about writing of all sorts, so even if you consider yourself a good writer, you should check it out!

Disabilities: Students with disabilities that may interfere with completing your course work should consult with me as soon as possible to discuss accommodating your needs. You should also contact the Office of Disability Resources in 22 Strong Hall or at 864-2620 or consult the website at <http://www.achievement.ku.edu/disability/>

Drop policy: If you are having trouble succeeding in the course, it is especially important that you consult with me so that we can develop a plan of action that may enable you to complete the course. If you decide to drop this class, please refer to the website below: <http://www.registrar.ku.edu/timetable/adddrop>

Policy on Student Academic Creations: Since one of the aims of this course is to teach students to write for specific audiences, ungraded student-authored work may be shared with other class members during the semester in which you are enrolled in the class. Please do not submit materials on sensitive subjects that you would not want your classmates to see or read, unless you inform the instructor in advance that you do not want your work shared with others. Other uses of student-authored work are subject to the University's Policy on Intellectual Property and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act. If your instructor desires to use your work outside of this class (e.g. as a sample for another class or future classes), you will be asked to fill out and sign a written form authorizing such use.

Course deadlines and evaluation:

Pop Quizzes		10 points
Paper One	Due T 14 February	10 points
Paper Two	Due R 2 March	10 points
Paper Three	Due T 4 April	10 points
Final Drafts	Due T 18 April	15 points
Oral Presentations	T 18 April – T 9 May	15 points
Final Exam	T May 16, 1:30-4pm	15 points
Revised Final Papers	Due T May 16 at 1:30pm	15 points
Total		100 points

For 0.5 extra credit points, you may attend an approved event and submit a one-page description and analysis of its relevance to our coursework.

Course Schedule

(Page references are to Chametzky, et al., eds. *Jewish American Literature: A Norton Anthology*)

- Week 1. TR 24-26 Jan: Lighthearted Beginnings: Literature and culture and the construction of Jewish American identity (JAI). Review syllabus and final project options.
- Read “Jewish Humor” 309-325. **Project interest forms due.**
- Week 2. TR 31 Jan & 2 Feb: Jewish Time: Torah, prayer, Sabbath, study, holidays.
- Read: Rebecca Samuel 38-41, Edna Ferber 269-82, Carl Rakosi, “Services” 611-612. **Project assignments and Forms. Meeting Sign-ups.**
- Alfred Kazin 771-83, Adrienne Rich 996-98, & Allegra Goodman 1135-48.
- Week 3. TR 7 & 9 Feb: Jewish Place: Diaspora, immigration, “America.”
- Read: “General Introduction” 1-16, Isaac Leeser 73-82, Isaac Mayer Wise 83-86. **Panel assignments.**
- “The Great Tide” 109-22, Horace Kallen 206-17, “The Yankee Talmud” 296-97.
- Week 4. TR 14 & 16 Feb: Jewish Immigrant Experience.
- Read: Abraham Cahan 122-33, Yente Serdatsky 150-153, Lamed Shapiro 154-161. **Paper One Due.**
- Mary Antin 190-205 and “A Bintl Briv” 298-308.
- Week 5. TR 21 & 23 Feb: Jewish Language.
- Read: Sidney Nyburg 178-89, Halpern 245-53.
- “Jews Translating Jews” 1149-56, poems 1156-70.
- Week 6. TR 28 Feb & 2 Mar: Jewish Show Business
- Read: “The Golden Age of the Broadway Song” 961-78.
- View: *The Jazz Singer*. **Paper Two Due. Submit Time Sheets and Supervisor’s Rating Form.**

Week 7. TR 7 & 9 Mar: Jewish Remembrances

Read: Charles Reznikoff 363, 367-68, 369, Henry Roth, 413-23, Isaac Bashevis Singer 612-23.

Emma Schlesinger, 671-77, Grace Paley, 794-804, Mark Mirsky 1060-66.

Week 8. TR 14 & 16 Mar: Holocaust literature and testimony.

Read: Cynthia Ozick 896-99, Elie Wiesel 899-911.

View: *The Holocaust: Through Our Own Eyes* (a documentary produced by MCHE (Midwest Center for Holocaust Education) consisting of videotaped testimony of local Holocaust survivors, archival photographs, and film footage.

Spring Break 18-26 March

Week 9. TR 28 & 30 Mar: Holocaust literature and second-generation writing.

Read: Philip Roth 915-45.

Art Spiegelman 1093-1104, Miriam Moses, 1111-20.

Week 10. T 4 Apr:

Melvin Jules Bukiet 1120-1128, Jacqueline Osherow 1129-33. **Paper Three Due.**

Weeks 10-11. RT 6 & 11 Apr: Young Jewish Americans.

Read: *Sh'ma* "Inside Next Gen" (November 2005).

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R 13 Apr: **Passover Observance (class cancelled).**

T 18 Apr: **Drafts of Final Papers Due.** Oral Presentations Begin (Panels of Six)

R 20 April: **Passover Observance (class cancelled).**

T 25 April: Oral Presentations

R 27 Apr: Oral Presentations

T 2 May: Oral Presentations. **Submit Time Sheets and Supervisor's Rating Form.**

R 4 May: Oral Presentations

T 9 May: Oral Presentations

R 11 May: Conclusions. Student Course Evaluations.

**T 16 May: Final Examination on Oral Presentations, 1:30-4pm.
Revised Final Papers Due.**