

Modern Jewish Culture: Key Texts and Their Afterlives

Comparative Literature 01:195:230

Jewish Studies 01:563:230

Provisional Syllabus

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Course Description

This course examines four key texts, written between 1894 and 1944: Sholem Aleichem's "Tevye the Dairyman" stories (the basis of the Broadway musical *Fiddler on the Roof*), Sh. Ansky's play "The Dybbuk," Samson Raphaelson's short story "The Day of Atonement" (the basis of the 1927 film *The Jazz Singer*), and Anne Frank's *Diary of a Young Girl*. These works have become fixtures not only of modern Jewish culture but also of world culture, primarily through adaptations and remediations in stage, film, broadcasting, music, dance, and visual art. Students will read these four texts, discuss the complex histories of their original composition, and examine the trajectories defined by how these works have been revisited over the years in diverse forms by various communities. As a result, students will consider how the texts in question have become modern cultural touchstones and how to understand the acts of adaptation and remediation as cultural practices in their own right.

No prerequisites. All readings in English.

Core Learning Goal

AHp. Analyze arts and/or literatures in themselves and in relation to specific histories, values, languages, cultures, and technologies.

Course Learning Goals

Students will:

- Examine the creative processes behind key works of modern Jewish culture, focusing on issues of composition, redaction, and translation.
- Examine the process by which these key works are adapted, remediated, or otherwise responded to in various media and genre, focusing on these efforts as cultural practices in their own right.
- Consider how the case studies at hand are emblematic of larger issues in modern culture, especially as they pertain to minority diaspora cultures responding to immigration, war, secularization, and other challenges that the "modern" poses to the "traditional."

Course Requirements

- Attendance, preparation for, and active participation in class sessions. Students are required to prepare for in-class discussion all assigned readings. Regular attendance of class and active participation in class discussion is required. Students are expected to come to class on time; to respect the protocols of classroom conduct—e.g., turning off cell phones, not eating during class, avoiding distracting chatter; to check their Rutgers email regularly for class announcements (e.g., changes in schedule or assignments); and to turn in written work on the dates due. Students who miss a class session should notify the instructor. *Students who find that they are unable to attend class regularly for some pressing reason should notify their dean as well as the professor as soon as possible.*
- 4 guided analysis papers (2-3 double-spaced pages each) on each of the four key works and an additional work related to each of these key works.
- 1 short essay (4-5 double-spaced pages), due at the end of the term, analyzing an adaptation or response to one of the four key works that was not discussed in class; a list of possible works for this assignment will be provided along with details of the assignment. (NOTE: The assignment for this essay will pose specific questions for assessing the learning goal AHp.)

NOTE: Students must do their own work and must cite properly all outside sources (readings, media works, websites, etc.) consulted in preparing written assignments. Students should review the university policy on Academic Integrity: <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-at-rutgers>. Failure to comply with this policy can result in failure of the course or more severe penalties.

Course grade will be based on class attendance and participation (15%), four guided analysis papers (60%), short essay, (25%). Work submitted after the deadline without an acceptable excuse (e.g., illness, family emergency) will be penalized.

Textbooks

- Sholom Aleichem, *Tevye the Dairyman and The Railroad Stories*
Publisher: Schocken (1996); ISBN: 0805210695
- Anne Frank, *The Diary of a Young Girl: The Definitive Edition*
Publisher: Bantam; ISBN: 9780553577129

All other readings will be posted on the course sakai site.

Course Schedule

NOTE: *Course schedule is subject to change.*

= textbook

* = reading on course sakai site

- 1: Introduction
- 2: Sholem Aleichem, background
- 3: Sholem Aleichem, *Tevye the Dairyman*#
- 4: *Tevye the Dairyman*, continued
- 5: Film: *Tevye* (in-class screening)
- 6: Discussion of film
- 7: Jerry Bock, Sheldon Harnick, and Joseph Stein, *Fiddler on the Roof* *
- 8: *Fiddler* phenomena [reading: excerpts from Alisa Solomon, *Wonder of Wonders: A Cultural History of Fiddler on the Roof* (Metropolitan, 2013)]
- 9: S. Ansky, background **[guided analysis paper #1 due]**
- 10: S. Ansky, *The Dybbuk**
- 11: Russian version of *The Dybbuk**
- 12: Film: *Der dibek* (in-class screening)
- 13: Discussion of film
- 14: Paddy Chayefsky, *The Tenth Man**
- 15: *The Jazz Singer*, background **[guided analysis paper #2 due]**
- 16: reading: Samson Raphaelson, "Day of Atonement"*
- 17: Film: *The Jazz Singer* (1927) (in-class screening)
- 18: Discussion of film
- 19: Films: *The Jazz Singer* (1953 and 1980 remakes)
- 20: Anne Frank, background **[guided analysis paper #3 due]**
- 21: Anne Frank, *Diary of a Young Girl*#
- 22: *Diary of a Young Girl*, continued
- 23: Frances Hackett and Albert Goodrich, *The Diary of Anne Frank**
- 24: Marjorie Agosín, *Dear Anne Frank: Poems**
- 25: Anne Frank humor [reading: Edward Portnoy, "Anne Frank on Crank: Comic Anxieties," in *Anne Frank Unbound: Media, Imagination, Memory* (Indiana University Press, 2012)]* **[guided analysis paper #4 due]**
- 26: The Anne Frank House <http://www.annefrank.org>