

Prospectus, Fall 2024

“Topics in Yiddish Literature and Culture”: The City and the Countryside in American Yiddish Literature (In translation)

Instructor: Mr. Shachar Levanon (he/him/his)

With the rise of the modern metropolis, topics of immigration, identity, alienation, communication, and materialism have become central to the literary imagination. In this course, we will focus on Yiddish writers who have represented the city and the countryside in their work. One of the questions the course will address is how Jewish immigrant writers and children of immigrants acclimated and reacted to American culture and society through their representations of urban and rural landscapes. What kind of themes emerge in their attempt to represent the American metropolis and, alternatively, the countryside? Writers’ encounters with these settings often reflected their hybrid and fluid identities, at times highlighting American components, at times underscoring Jewish elements. The course will explore the interaction between these components.

All readings in the course will be in English translation, although some primary sources may be available in Yiddish for students who know the language. Classes and coursework will be conducted in English.

Course ID and 7-digit Number: YDSH 1111-401 (also listed as: COML 1111 / GRMN 1111 / JWST 1111)

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Attendance, Preparation and Participation:

Discussion is a mainstay of the course and participation is crucial to its success. Reading the texts before class is essential. Your questions, opinions, and observations are an important part of the course and you are encouraged to participate in the ongoing class discussions. The texts and supplemental readings are intended to provide further context for the different periods and writers.

Writing Assignments and Presentation:

FORMAL ESSAYS: The course requires two formal essays. The first will be 3-5 pp., the second, 8-10 pp.

CLASS PRESENTATION:

A formal presentation (15-20 minutes) on a given topic is required during the course. If a student has difficulty giving a presentation, an alternative can be discussed with the instructor.

3/5/2024

PERCENTAGES:

Class attendance, preparation, and participation (30%)

Oral presentation (15%)

One short essay (3-5 pp.) (15%)

One final essay (8-10 pp.) (40%).

REQUIRED TEXTS AND AUTHORS: (in order of use) (NOTE: there may be some substitutions)

All books will be available for purchase at the Penn Book Store (36th and Walnut), or on Amazon. All will be on reserve in Rosengarten. Please bring each day's readings to class, either printed out, or on your screen.

The readings will focus on poetry and short fiction, and may include essays or memoirs, as well as excerpts from novels. The authors may include poets, such as Moyshe Leyb Halpern, Joseph Rolnik, Berish Vaynshteyn, Anna Margolin, Ruven Iceland, Kadya Molodowsky, Celia Dropkin, Malka Heifetz Tussman, and fiction writers, such as Lamed Shapiro, Sholem Asch, Miriam Kaplilove and Blume Lempel.

NOTE: All students may consult with [Student Financial Services](#) to find out what support they are eligible to receive to cover course costs or other items that ensure their health, safety, and secure learning environment.