Yiddish Literature in Translation

This course is a survey of major works in modern Yiddish fiction and drama, starting in 1864. Our readings focus on four areas: 1) the three classic Yiddish authors—S. Y. Abramovitsh, Sholem Aleichem, and I. L. Peretz; 2) Yiddish drama by Gordin and Ansky; 3) modernist trends in Yiddish—Lamed Shapiro, David Bergelson and Yiddish women writers—including Schtok, Schulner, Lempel, Serdatsky, Dropkin, Raskin, Bercovitch, and Halpern. While placing each author’s work in historical and biographical context, we will pay special attention to the role of satire, parody, narrative techniques, and figures of speech. Each of the first three papers must be revised, based on the instructors’ comments, in order to fulfill the requirements for a writing intensive class.

I. Classic Yiddish Fiction

Introduction. Read I. L. Peretz, “If Not Higher!” (1900), in CYS

A. S. Y. Abramovitsh, The Little Man (1864), in CYS

Benjamin the Third (1878), in TMBP

Fishke the Lame (1869), in CYS

With clips from the film Fishke der krumen (1939)

Fishke the Lame (1888), in TMBP

Paper #1 (3 pages, ~1000 words) due on the two versions of Fishke

B. Sholem Aleichem, Tevye Stories:

“Hodel” (1904) and “Chava” (1906), in CYS

With clips from the Yiddish film Tevye (1939) and from two other film versions of the Tevye stories: Fiddler on the Roof (1971) and Get Thee Out (1991). Read Ken Frieden’s essay, A Century in the Life of Sholem Aleichem’s Tevye (distributed)

Monologues, in CYS:

“Holiday Dainties” (1904) and “Advice” (1904);

“Joseph” (1905) and “A Business with a Greenhorn” (1916)

C. I. L. Peretz, "The Shtrayml" (1894), in CYS, and

Hasidic Stories: “Kabbalists” (1891/1894) and “The Rebbe’s Pipe” (1895); “Teachings of the Hasidim” (1894/1902)

and "Between Two Mountains" (1900), in CYS

Paper #2 (3 pages, ~1000 words) due on one of Peretz’s neo-hasidic stories
II. Yiddish Drama

A. Jacob Gordin, *God, Man, and Devil* (1900), in *GMD* 10/27-10/29
   With clips from the film *God, Man, and Devil* (1950)

   With clips from the film *The Dybbuk* (1937)

III. Modernism in Yiddish

A. "Lamed Shapiro, "Eating Days," in *TYS* (photocopy/digitized file) 11/10


C. Blume Lempel, "Correspondents"; Yente Serdatsky, "Unchanged";
   Celia Dropkin, "A Dancer"; Miriam Raskin, "Zlatke" and "At a Picnic," in *FT* 11/17-19

D. "Bryna Bercovitch, "Becoming Revolutionary," and
   "Frume Halpern, "Goodbye, Honey" (photocopy/digitized file) 11/24

   Paper #3 (3 pages, ~1000 words) due on one of these stories

E. "David Bergelson, "In a Backwoods Town," in *TYS* (photocopy/digitized file) 12/1

F. David Bergelson, *Departing* (1920) 12/3-12/8

   Paper #4 (3 pages, ~1000 words) due on Bergelson’s novel

Review Session 12/10

*Final Examination: 2:45-4:45 p.m. on Tuesday, 15 December; no exceptions, please!*
Texts:


Requirements: Regular attendance, class participation, an oral report, four short papers, and a final examination.

Papers are due in class on the day when each literary work is being discussed. They should be 3-page (double-spaced) close analyses, focusing on literary aspects such as narrative techniques or figurative language. Because this is a writing intensive class, each of the first three papers must be revised on the basis of comments by the instructors. The revision is due one week after the paper has been returned to the student.

Quizzes: To ensure diligent preparation of the reading assignments by all students, there will be random quizzes. Come to class even if you haven’t read the assignment as carefully as you would like.
**Plagiarism:** Acknowledge your sources! Don’t even think of taking anything off the web or from another student’s paper without using quotation marks and a reference to the site or source. It’s unethical, as easy for professors to catch as it is for students to steal, and the consequence is always a failing grade.

**Goals:** While learning about Yiddish literature, students should develop skills such as close reading, critical thinking, scholarly writing, and public speaking.

**In-Class Assignment:** In addition to taking occasional quizzes during class time, each student is responsible for an oral presentation. Lead a class discussion of one of the stories we read. Develop your own interpretation and work with the class on probing deeper meanings.

**Grading:** Attendance and participation (20%), 4 essays and 3 revisions (50%), an oral presentation (10%), and quizzes & final examination (20%).

**Attendance:** Your final grade will be adversely affected if you miss more than two classes. Save these permissible absences for when you really need them!

“The Syracuse University Academic Integrity Policy holds students accountable for the integrity of the work they submit. Students should be familiar with the Policy and know that it is their responsibility to learn about instructor and general academic expectations with regard to proper citation of sources in written work. The policy also governs the integrity of work submitted in exams and assignments as well as the veracity of signatures on attendance sheets and other verifications of participation in class activities. Serious sanctions can result from academic dishonesty of any sort. For more information and the complete policy, see [http://academicintegrity.syr.edu](http://academicintegrity.syr.edu).”

“Students who are in need of disability-related academic accommodations must register with the Office of Disability Services (ODS), 304 University Avenue, Room 309, 315-443-4498. Students with authorized disability-related accommodations should provide a current Accommodation Authorization Letter from ODS to the instructor and review those accommodations with the instructor. Accommodations, such as exam administration, are not provided retroactively; therefore, planning for accommodations as early as possible is necessary. For further information, see the ODS website, [http://disabilityservices.syr.edu/](http://disabilityservices.syr.edu/).”