

REL/JSP/LIT 235; meets with ETS 230

Travel Narratives and Pilgrimages

“Change your place and change your luck.” –Talmudic saying, Rosh ha-shana 16b

When does a trip become a pilgrimage? We can make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, but we could also make a pilgrimage to a recording studio in Nashville, a Hollywood set, the Louvre, or Faulkner’s home. The more we invest a destination with meaning, the more appropriate it is to call a visit a pilgrimage. Sometimes a journey, like the Camino de Santiago, is the pilgrimage.

Sea voyages influenced the rise of the European novel, and travel has been a prominent motif in religious literature and popular culture. We will look at pilgrimage narratives and accounts of secular travel, primarily by Jewish travelers. Most claim authenticity, referring to places in the world, although the line between fact and fiction is frequently blurred.

Because many travel narratives refer to places that still exist, it is possible to find images of those places. Is it the same place, decades or centuries later? How relevant are maps and images that we can find today? The internet facilitates virtual travel, exploring the world on the web.

In this writing intensive course, students will be asked to write very short analyses—just a few sentences—for almost every class session. Respond to the italicized questions below and e-mail your responses to the instructors by 9 a.m. on the morning of class. There will also be four short analytical essays about the texts we read. You will also write your own travel narratives. Have you made a pilgrimage? What kind of travel makes the best story? Where is the line between travelogue and fiction?

Required Textbooks (in order of appearance in class)

Jewish Travellers in the Middle Ages: 19 Firsthand Accounts. Ed. Elkan Nathan Adler.
New York: Dover, 1987.

Romanelli, Samuel. *Travail in an Arab Land*. Trans. Yedida K. Stillman and Norman A. Stillman. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1989.

Nahman of Bratslav and Nathan Sternharz [1806-1810/1815]. *The Tales*. Trans. Arnold J. Band.
New York: Paulist Press, 1978.

Classic Yiddish Stories. Ed. Ken Frieden. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2004.

Singer, I. B. *Gimpel the Fool and Other Stories*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2006.

_____. *In My Father’s Court*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1991.

[All available at the SU Bookstore. Used copies of most of these books are available on Amazon.com and bn.com]

Other readings are available as scanned PDFs on Blackboard. **Print them out and bring them to class for discussion!**

Part One: Pre-Modern Travel Narratives & Pilgrimages

- WEEK 1 Introduction: Sea Travel in the Hebrew Bible
The Book of Jonah and Psalm 107. We will refer to the Jewish Publication Society *Tanakh* [PDFs on Blackboard], but other translations are acceptable.
What do these texts say about God's role in sea travels?
Make note of key phrases that could recur in subsequent sea tales.
Can we situate Jonah's travels on a map?
Send your very short reply to kfrieden@syr.edu and embrodeu@syr.edu
- WEEK 2 Pilgrimages to Jerusalem and Beyond
Benjamin of Tudela in Jerusalem [PDF on Blackboard, pp. 82-86]
Isaac Chelo in Jerusalem, in *Jewish Travellers in the Middle Ages*, pp. 130-134.
Which sites described by these authors may be found today?
Find images of some places described in these texts and post them to our Discussion Board (Discussions>Maps & Images) in Blackboard.
- Benjamin of Tudela**, in *Jewish Travellers in the Middle Ages*, pp. 38-63
Isaac Chelo, in *Jewish Travellers in the Middle Ages*, pp. 134-150
Make a note of passages that are based on the Hebrew Bible and others that convey empirical observations.
Again, find images of some places described in these texts and post them to our Discussion Board (Discussions>Maps & Images) in Blackboard. Subscribe to the forum.
- WEEK 3 Fifteenth-Century Travelers from Italy
Rabbi Meshullam ben R. Menahem of Volterra (1481), in *Jewish Travellers in the Middle Ages*, pp. 156-207.
"The Letters of Obadiah Jaré da Bertinoro" (1487-90), in *Jewish Travellers in the Middle Ages*, pp. 209-250.
To what extent do these travelers describe what they have read, heard, and expect to see, and to what extent do they describe what they have in fact seen?
Bring notes on illustrative passages to class.
In class: Write a brief travel narrative—based on your experience or fantasy.

Part Two: Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Travels

- WEEK 4 Willem Bontekoe, *Memorable Description of the East Indian Voyage, 1618-25*, trans. C. B. Bodde-Hodgkinson and Pieter Geyl (New York: McBride, 1929). [Pages 1-70; PDF on Blackboard, Adobe pages 1-34]
First 2-page paper is due: Analyze some religious elements of the text.

What is the implicit or explicit world view of the author? How does the method of presentation relate to the content? Where does Bontekoe show ethnocentrism?

- WEEK 5 Samuel Romanelli, *Travail in an Arab Land* [1792], trans. Yedida K. Stillman and Norman A. Stillman (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1989).
What is Romanelli's view of Providence or fate? Note the use of biblical language. Find some images that are relevant to Romanelli's narrative.
- WEEK 6 [Interlude] The Seven Voyages of Sindbad the Sailor. In *The Arabian Nights' Entertainments*, trans. Edward Forster (Philadelphia: Hazard, 1856), pp. 67-87. [PDF on Blackboard]
From a literary standpoint, how do these fantastic narratives differ from other accounts of travel we have read? Leaving aside the fanciful content, describe different narrative techniques. Find illustrations of these tales and contemplate how visual representation corresponds to the text.
- WEEK 7 George Keate, *An Account of the Pelew Islands in the Western Part of the Pacific Ocean, and the Shipwreck of the Antelope, East-India Packet, There*. Dublin: White, 1788, pp. 10-97. [PDF on Blackboard]
Second 2-page paper is due: *Analyze George Keate's narrative methods, primarily based on Captain Wilson's first-hand account. Look for passages that show the ethnocentrism of the British. Does Keate foster the myth of the "Noble Savage"? Consider the illustrations that were included in the early editions of this book, available on Blackboard under Content Area "Keate Engravings"*

Part Three: Fantasy Travels, Allegories, & Pilgrimages

- WEEK 8 "The Tale of the Jerusalemite," in *Rabbinic Fantasies: Imaginative Narratives from Classical Hebrew Literature*, ed. David Stern and Mark Jay Mirsky (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1990). [PDF on Blackboard]
Compare and contrast this tale to "The Seven Voyages of Sindbad the Sailor."
- Nahman of Bratslav [and Nathan Sternharz, 1806-1810/1815], *The Tales*, trans. Arnold J. Band (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), Tales 1 and 2.
Notice how the emperor's daughter becomes the active force in Tale 2. What role does cross-dressing play in this story?
- WEEK 9 Nahman of Bratslav [and Nathan Sternharz, 1806-1810/1815], *The Tales*, trans. Arnold J. Band (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), Esp. Tales 6, 9, 10, 12.
Tale 6: Does the wise man succeed in his quest for a portrait?
Tale 9: In what way is this story a critique of sophistication?
Tale 10: Why do "the seven places" occur twice, in different ways?

Tale 12: What is the relationship between the misguided factions (pp. 230-34) and “the holy community” gathered together by the Baal Tefilla (Master of Prayer)?

- WEEK 10 Nathan of Nemirov [Nathan Sternharz], “The Pilgrimage” [“Order of His Journey to the Land of Israel,” 1815], in *Rabbi Nachman’s Wisdom*, trans. Aryeh Kaplan (Brooklyn: Breslov Research Institute, 1973). [PDFs of Pilgrimage 1, pp. 33-102]
Nathan of Breslov [Nathan Sternharz], “Journey to the Holy Land,” in *Tzaddik (Chayey Moharan)* (1820s/1874), trans. Avraham Greenbaum (Jerusalem: Breslov Research Institute, 1987). [PDFs of Journey 2, pp. 45-60.]

Third 2-page paper is due: *How do these two accounts, written by the same author about Nahman’s pilgrimage, differ? Analyze the differences and their significance.*

- WEEK 11 [Interlude] Cervantes, *Don Quixote*,
Part 1, chapters 1-6 [pp. 56-92 on Blackboard]
Part 1, chapters 39-41 [pp. 393-431 on Blackboard]
How is Don Quixote a parody of chivalrous romances?

Part Four: Travels in Eastern Europe

- WEEK 12 S. Y. Abramovitsh, “The Little Man” and “Fishke the Lame,” in *Classic Yiddish Stories*, pp. 3-54; Lev Binshtok, “A Celebration of Yiddish Literature,” pp. 181-206.

Analyze parallels between the biographical account by Lev Binshtok and the fictional narratives by Abramovitsh.

- WEEK 13 S. Y. Abramovitsh, *The Brief Travels of Benjamin the Third*, trans. Hillel Halkin from *Tales of Mendele the Book Peddler*, ed. Ken Frieden and Dan Miron (New York: Schocken Books, 1996), pp. 301-391. [PDF on Blackboard]

Final 2-page paper is due: *Analyze ways in which Abramovitsh parodies aspects of the travel narrative tradition we have studied.*

- WEEK 14 I. B. Singer, *Gimpel the Fool and Other Stories*
“Gimpel the Fool,” pp. 3-21; *How is this story about storytelling?*
“The Mirror,” pp. 77-88; *What does Singer accomplish with his demon narrator?*
“The Little Shoemakers,” esp. ch. 5, pp. 109-114;
Show how Singer refers back to biblical descriptions of sea travel.
Look for images of places referred to in these stories.

WEEK 15 I. B. Singer, *In My Father's Court*
“The Sacrifice,” “Why the Geese Shrieked,” “A Broken Engagement,” pp. 3-22;
How does the genre of memoir change Singer's literary style?
“To the Land of Israel,” pp. 80-86; “The Salesman,” pp. 116-122;
“Reb Chayim Gorshkover,” pp. 123-129; “To the Wild Cows,” pp. 175-182;
“The Recruit” and “The Studio,” pp. 231-241.
Look for images of places referred to in these stories.

Learning Outcomes: While learning about travel literature and ethnic literary traditions, students should develop skills such as close reading, critical thinking, scholarly writing, and public speaking.

Papers should be two-page (double-spaced) close analyses, focusing on literary aspects such as narrative techniques or figurative language, in conjunction with ideological issues.

Requirements and Grading: Four two-page papers, double-spaced, with three revisions (40% of grade), short text analyses and travel writing (35% of grade); careful preparation of readings, regular attendance, and class participation (25% of grade);

Plagiarism: Always acknowledge your sources, because plagiarism is a serious offense. Don't even think of taking anything off the web without using quotation marks. It's unethical, as easy for professors to catch as it is for students to steal, and the consequence is a failing grade. The difference between research and plagiarism is quotation marks. Use them, and give citations!

WE INTERPRET TEXTS IN THIS CLASS—“TEXT” IS NOT A VERB!

(If you “text” during class, you will be marked absent.)

((More than two absences will lower your grade.))

Syracuse University requires that these paragraphs accompany syllabi:

Academic Integrity

Syracuse University sets high standards for academic integrity. Those standards are supported and enforced by students, including those who serve as academic integrity hearing panel members and hearing officers. The presumptive sanction for a first offense is course failure, accompanied by the transcript notation “Violation of the Academic Integrity Policy.” The standard sanction for a first offense by graduate students is suspension or expulsion. Students should review the Office of Academic Integrity online resource “Twenty Questions and Answers About the Syracuse University Academic Integrity Policy” and confer with instructors about course-specific citation methods, permitted collaboration (if any), and rules for examinations. The Policy also governs the veracity of signatures on attendance sheets and other verification of participation in class activities. Additional guidance for students can be found in the Office of Academic Integrity resource: ‘What does academic integrity mean?’
<http://academicintegrity.syr.edu/what-does-academic-integrity-mean/>

This course may use Turnitin, a plagiarism prevention system. The Internet has made it all too easy and tempting for students to “cut and paste” material into papers, without including proper citations. Some papers that you write in this class will be submitted to Turnitin, a service that identifies “matched text.” The instructor will then interpret the originality report, based on your writing capability and writing style. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database, solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers.

Disability-Related Accommodations

If you believe that you need accommodations for a disability, please contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), <http://disabilityservices.syr.edu>, located in Room 309 of 804 University Avenue, or call (315) 443-4498 for an appointment to discuss your needs and the process for requesting accommodations. ODS is responsible for coordinating disability-related accommodations and will issue students with documented Disabilities Accommodation Authorization Letters, as appropriate. Since accommodations may require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, please contact ODS as soon as possible.

Religious Observances Policy

SU religious observances policy, found at http://supolicies.syr.edu/emp_ben/religious_observance.htm, recognizes the diversity of faiths represented among the campus community and protects the rights of students, faculty, and staff to observe religious holidays according to their tradition. Under the policy, students are provided an opportunity to make up any examination, study, or work requirements that may be missed because of a religious observance, if they notify their instructors before the end of the second week of classes. For fall and spring semesters, an online notification process is available through MySlice/StudentServices/Enrollment/MyReligiousObservances from the first day of class until the end of the second week of class.