

Prof. Ken Frieden <kfrieden@syr.edu>
Office: 310 Tolley; office hour: T 3:30-4:30
Benjamin Fellow: Sarah Barkin <smbarkin@syr.edu>

JSP/LIT/REL 333; ETS 315
TTh 2:00-3:20
Fall 2009

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 Shtok, 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

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| Introduction. Read I. L. Peretz, "If Not Higher!" (1900), in CYS | 9/1-9/3 |
| A. S. Y. Abramovitsh, <i>The Little Man</i> (1864), in CYS | 9/8-9/10 |
| <i>Benjamin the Third</i> (1878), in TMBP | 9/15-9/17 |
| <i>Fishke the Lame</i> (1869), in CYS
With clips from the film <i>Fishke der krumer</i> (1939) | 9/22-9/24 |
| <i>Fishke the Lame</i> (1888), in TMBP
Paper #1 (3 pages, ~1000 words) due on the two versions of <i>Fishke</i> | 9/29-10/1 |
| B. Sholem Aleichem, <i>Tevey</i> Stories:
"Hodel" (1904) and "Chava" (1906), in CYS
With clips from the Yiddish film <i>Tevey</i> (1939) and from two
other film versions of the Tevey stories: <i>Fiddler on the Roof</i>
(1971) and <i>Get Thee Out</i> (1991). Read Ken Frieden's essay,
<i>A Century in the Life of Sholem Aleichem's Tevey</i> (distributed) | 10/6-10/8 |
| <i>Monologues</i> , in CYS :
"Holiday Dainties" (1904) and "Advice" (1904);
"Joseph" (1905) and "A Business with a Greenhorn" (1916) | 10/13-15 |
| C. I. L. Peretz, "The Shtrayml" (1894), in CYS , and
<i>Hasidic</i> 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 | 10/20-10/22 |

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)
- B. *S. Ansky, *The Dybbuk* (1914/1920)(photocopy/digitized file) 11/3-11/5
With clips from the film *The Dybbuk* (1937)

III. Modernism in Yiddish

- A. *Lamed Shapiro, "Eating Days," in **TYS** (photocopy/digitized file) 11/10
- B. Fradel Shtok, "The Veil," and Dora Schulner, "Reyzele's Wedding," in **FT** 11/12
- 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:

Abramovitsh, S. Y. *Tales of Mendele the Book Peddler. Fishke the Lame and Benjamin the Third.* Ed. Dan Miron and Ken Frieden. Trans. Ted Gorelick and Hillel Halkin. New York: Schocken, 1996. [**TMBP**]

Bergelson, David. *The Stories of David Bergelson.* Trans. Golda Werman. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1996.

Classic Yiddish Stories of S. Y. Abramovitsh, Sholem Aleichem, and I. L. Peretz. Ed. Ken Frieden. Trans. Ken Frieden, Ted Gorelick, and Michael Wex. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2004. [**CYS**]

Found Treasures: Stories by Yiddish Women Writers, ed. Frieda Forman et al. Toronto: Second Story Press, 1994. [**FT**]

God, Man, and Devil: Yiddish Plays in Translation. Trans. and ed. Nahma Sandrow. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1999. [**GMD**]

A Treasury of Yiddish Stories. Ed. Irving Howe and Eliezer Greenberg. New York: Penguin Books, 1990. [**TYS**] Out of print; used copies of this highly recommended text may be available at the bookstore or at www.amazon.com and www.barnesandnoble.com.

* Photocopies and/or digitized texts: Lamed Shapiro's "Eating Days" and David Bergelson's "In a Backwoods Town," both from *A Treasury of Yiddish Stories* (New York: Penguin Books, 1990); S. Ansky's *The Dybbuk* is excerpted from *The Dybbuk and the Yiddish Imagination: A Haunted Reader.* Ed. and trans. Joachim Neugroschel (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2000); Bryna Bercovitch's "Becoming Revolutionary" and Frume Halpern's "Goodbye, Honey" are from *Arguing with the Storm: Stories by Yiddish Women Writers,* ed. Rhea Tregebov (New York: Feminist Press, 2008).

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>.”

“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/>.”