

GOALS:

This course offers a survey-overview of Jewish literature in the 20th century. Given the enormity of that literature, the course can only offer a “representative” sampling of authors and texts therefore the course has been artificially created around Jews who have received the Nobel Prize in Literature (or Peace) and two additional writers. This provides nine (9) writers who offer us essays, poetry, short stories, novels, and drama. We will be reading from different genre, Europeans, Israelis and Americans with several texts in translation, yet even with all of this curricular diversity the reading list still only contains one woman, an obvious and acknowledged flaw. Critical reading of all the texts will be emphasized, so that interpretation is valued very highly in this course. This is also an intensive writing course which means there will be five (5) shorter papers and NO tests.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

In My Father’s Court, Isaac Bashevis Singer

Kaddish for an Unborn Child, Imre Kertesz

Twenty-One Stories, S Y Agnon

Collected Stories, Saul Bellow

The Homecoming, Harold Pinter

The Plot Against America, Philip Roth

Messengers of God, Elie Wiesel

The Sabbath, Abraham J. Heschel

Nelly Sachs’ poetry will be passed out as a packet.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

All assigned readings. Class participation is vital for the active process of interpretation and understanding and **assumes** attendance. Five papers of 5-7 pages dealing with: the world of Yiddish, the Holocaust, Israel, assimilation, and contemporary spirituality. The questions will deal with two texts and you have one week to write the paper. 2/7-2/14; 2/28–3/11; 3/27-4/3; 4/17- 4/24; 5/1-5/8.

GRADES:

This is a course in reading, interpretation, and understanding Jewish identity as illuminated through literature, therefore there are very few facts to be learned and evaluated. This is an upper division/graduate “seminar” and it is assumed that every student will participate in the community of learning that we hope to create. Grades will be determined through the writing, conversation and intangibles of how the student fully engages the texts.

INTEGRITY:

Each student accepts full responsibility for the university honor-cod and pledges that any written assignment will include every attribution of source taken from a text or website material. A willful and knowing abuse of this pledge of integrity will result in “failure” and immediate withdrawal from the course.

Before reading each of the assigned texts, take time to prepare the biography of each of the nine writers. This is **YOUR** responsibility. Check on the Nobel Prize website, use kartoo.com (a scholar’s search engine), and of course Google. I want you to be aware of the texts we are reading in translation and what that means for you as a reader. Be mindful of keeping a glossary list of specific idioms referring to Jews and Judaism, and ask about them in class and look them up in order to understand their meaning and implications in the

texts you are reading do not ignore words/phrases you don't understand. You are encouraged to create a smaller reading group within which you can share your ideas, background material as well as discuss the questions before writing your papers. ***I encourage group thought but require individual writing.***

Class Schedule//Assignments:

Jan 17 – Introduction: getting ready to read – using the title pages – who are we reading – putting 20th century Jewish life in perspective.

Jan 22-24-29 – In My Father's Court – Isaac Bashevis Singer

Jan 31-Feb 5-7 – Poetry of the Shoah/Holocaust – Nelly Sachs

Feb 12-14-19– Kaddish for an Unborn Child – Imre Kertez
Read [article about Kertez's writing](#)

Feb 21-26-28 – Twenty-One Stories – S Y Agnon

March 11-13-18 – Collected Stories – Saul Bellow

March 20-25-27 – The Homecoming – Harold Pinter

Apr 1-3-8 – The Plot Against America – Philip Roth

Apr 10-15-17 – Messengers of God – Elie Wiesel

Apr 22-24-29 – The Sabbath – Abraham J. Heschel

May 1 - Finding the Jew in the 20th Century Literature

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