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2022

### Intro to Jewish American Literature

Amy W. Kratka  
*CUNY City College*

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FIQWS 10015: The City College of New York, CUNY

Dr. Amy W. Kratka

Mondays & Wednesdays, 9:30am-10:45am NAC 6/314

This course is IN PERSON. You can find our syllabus and all readings on Blackboard.

This course is ZTC: zero textbook cost

[akratka@ccny.cuny.edu](mailto:akratka@ccny.cuny.edu)

Office: NAC 5/202

Office Phone: 212.650.6790

**Objective:** In this course we will make use of this country's great books to trace the experience of Jews in America from the beginning of the 20th Century to the present moment. From their arrival on these shores they traversed new terrain literally (but also metaphorically) with respect to language, religious observance, and cultural awareness. After a few decades, and almost paradoxically, they became so comfortable with their new hyphenated (Jewish-American) identity that they relished playing the role of outsider, and literature began to reflect this marginalized status.

Once their marginalized roles were exhausted, American Jews began to appear in fiction as, simply, people. They became people with preoccupations stemming from sources other than their born identity; now they were Jews who grappled with their new and surprisingly strong attachments to *Yiddishkeit*, feminism, observance, family, Israel.

It will be our privilege this semester to garner from these characters and their stories a particular understanding of Jewish identity, and Jewish-American identity plus a more universal appreciation of the general human condition and its wants, needs, hurts, and loves.

Methodology: All Readings Have Been Made Available on Blackboard! We will maintain a text-based approach in this course, stressing careful and close-readings of primary texts augmented by an awareness of theory, culture, language and literary trajectory as written into the secondary texts. Read carefully and bring your readings to class!

Projected Course Learning Outcomes: Students will

1. be able to critically and independently *evaluate* and *reflect on* sources that speak to the Jewish religious and cultural experience
2. *demonstrate* a basic knowledge of the various stages in the evolution of Jewish civilization and how historical factors have impacted these changes
3. *formulate* new and creative approaches to these traditions based on their own research

4. *connect* what has been learned in class via fieldwork experience with specific and tangible elements of Jewish life today

**Requirements:** Students will write three (formal) papers for this class:

- 1) a Summary and Response Paper, 2-3 pages.
- 2) an Exploratory Essay—a study of one of our authors, 2-3 pages.
- 3) a Researched and Critical Analysis Paper, 5-7 pages. Details and guidelines will follow.

Plagiarism is a serious offense. Taking someone else's work and passing it off as your own constitutes plagiarism. A plagiarized paper or presentation will receive an automatic F, and the student will be brought up before the Academic Standards Committee.

**Percentage Breakdown:**

Attendance and Participation: 10%

Oral Presentation: 20%

Exploratory Essay (Author Study 2-3 pages): 20%

Summary and Response Paper (2-3 pages) : 20%

Researched and Critical Analysis Paper (5-7 pages): 30%

**Schedule: (This may change according to the needs of the class)**

Mon August 29: Introduction Grace Paley's "The Loudest Voice"

Wed August 31: No Class: Instead of class, please read "The Jewish People: A Short History" by David Myers

Mon Sept 5: No Class (Labor Day)

Wed Sept 7: Henry Roth's *Call it Sleep* (p9-126)

Mon Sept 12: Henry Roth's *Call it Sleep* (you can skip until p187 and read until 242)

Wed Sept 14: Wrap-up of Roth's *Call it Sleep* (you can skip 243-298 and just read p299-441). Steven Kellman's biography of Roth. Discussion of Paper 1: Summary & Response)

Mon Sept 19: Cynthia Ozick's "The Pagan Rabbi"

Wed Sept 21: Cynthia Ozick's "Bloodshed"

Mon Sept 26: No Class (Rosh Hashana)

Wed Sept 28: **Paper 1 Summary & Response Due.** Norma Rosen's "What Must I Say to You"

Thurs Sept 29 **Monday Schedule:** Philip Roth's "Eli, the Fanatic"

Mon Oct 3: Philip Roth's "Conversion of the Jews" and **Discussion of Paper 2: Author Study**

Wed Oct 5: No Class (Yom Kippur)

Mon Oct 10: No Class (Columbus Day & Sukkot)

Wed Oct 12: **In Class workshop for Paper 2: Author Study** and Bernard Malamud's "The Lady of the Lake"

Mon Oct 17: No Class (Shmini Atzeret)

Wed Oct 19: Bernard Malamud's "The Magic Barrel"

Mon Oct 24: Paper 2 Due: Oral Presentation of selected excerpts of these papers

Wed Oct 26: Philip Roth's *Goodbye, Columbus*

Mon Oct 31: Film: *Keeping the Faith* (2000, Dir. Edward Norton)

Wed Nov 2: Film: *Keeping the Faith*

Mon Nov 7: Cynthia Ozick's "The Shawl" and YouTube of Ozick: Interview with Lawrence Bridges

Wed Nov 9: Cynthia Ozick's *Rosa*

Mon Nov 14: Tova Mirvis: "Divorced from My Husband and My Faith" and "Finding God in a Hot Slice of Pizza" (From the *New York Times* Opinionator)

Wed Nov 16: Discussion of Paper 3: Researched Critical Analysis Paper

Mon Nov 21: Film: *Crossing Delancey*

Wed Nov 23: Film: *Crossing Delancey*

Mon Nov 28: Tova Mirvis's *Visible City*

Wed Nov 30: *Visible City*

Mon Dec 5: Last-minute workshop for Paper 3

Wed Dec 7: *Curb Your Enthusiasm*: "The Survivor" Paper 3 Due: Researched Critical Analysis Paper

Mon Dec 12: Wrap-up and Papers Returned