

LLIT 2031 Latin American Jewish Literature
Instructor: Edna Aizenberg
Day/Time: MW 2-3:40

Spring 2007

Description: The course examines literature by Latin American Jewish authors and the impact of Jews and Judaism (what Borges called *lo hebreo*) on major Latin American writers. Class discussions explore issues of cultural identity and linguistic transfer in these works, as well as their relation to Latin American modes of narration such as magical realism and testimonial writing. Authors read include, Alberto Gerchunoff, Jorge Luis Borges, Jacobo Timerman, Moacyr Scliar, and Rosa Nissan. Films and videos are part of the course. Class discussions and readings are in English translation, but students who can read the originals in Spanish or Portuguese are encouraged to do so.

Required Books:

- Alberto Gerchunoff, *Parricide on the Pampa? A New Translation and Study of Alberto Gerchunoff's Los gauchos judíos*, Ed. Edna Aizenberg. Iberoamericana, 2000.
- Jorge Luis Borges, *Labyrinths*, Norton / New Directions, 1964.
- Jacobó Timerman, *Prisoner without a Name, Cell without a Number*, U of Wisconsin P 2002.
- Marjorie Agosín, *A Cross and a Star*, Feminist P, 1997.
- Moacyr Scliar, *The Centaur in the Garden*, U of Wisconsin P, 2003.
- Rosa Nissán, *Like a Bride / Like a Mother*, U of New Mexico P, 2002.
- Ilan Stavans, ed. *Tropical Synagogues: Short Stories by Jewish-Latin American Writers*, Holmes & Meier, 1994.
- From Pale to Pampas*, course packet

Course Requirements:

1. *The assigned readings.* These readings form the basis of each session. Please bring the material we are reading to class. Your preparation and participation will count in the final grade.
 2. *Exams and assignments:* Two short papers; oral presentations; a midterm; a final paper. Paper topics will be provided.
 3. *Classroom environment:* To ensure the proper learning environment do not bring food to class. Turn off beepers and cell phones, and come on time.
 4. *Final Grade:* The final grade is based on a combination of all the marks received as well as on classroom work. Excessive absence, tardiness, and assignments handed in late will affect the grade.
- . 10% of the grade will be left to the instructor's discretion based on an assessment of the student's interest, participation, and motivation.

Course Topics:

Week 1: *Cutting the Ground:* Stavans anthology, *Tropical Synagogues*, intro 1-38; In *Pale to Pampas:* Wirth-Nesher, “What Is Jewish Literature?” Deleuze & Guattari, “What Is a Minor Literature?” ; Feierstein selections.

Discussion: Who are Latin America’s Jews? Why Latin American Jewish literature now? Is there a theory for this literature?

Week 2: *Cutting the Ground (cont.)*

Week 3 *Alberto Gerchunoff: A Problematic Precursor:* Gerchunoff, *Parricide on the Pampa*; In *Pale to Pampas:* Alpersohn, “From Russian Pale.”

Discussion: Immigration and belonging; the gaucho as symbol; a genealogy for Argentine Jewish literature.

Week 4: *Gerchunoff (cont.):* In Stavans anthology, Glickman, “The Last Immigrant”; In *Pale to Pampas*, Borges, “El indigno” / “Unworthy”; “Alongside the Dead,” Burns, “Films”; film: “Los gauchos judíos” (Argentine production).

Discussion: Other voices: Gerchunoff vs. Alpersohn; vs. Borges. Where are the foremothers? See Glickman

Week 5: *J. L. Borges: Constructing ‘lo hebreo’ as a Latin American Cultural Discourse:* In *Pale to Pampas:* Borges, “I, a Jew,” “Notes on Germany and the War”: especially, “A Pedagogy of Hatred,” and “Definition of a Germanophile”; *Labyrinths*. “The Argentine Writer and Tradition,” “The Secret Miracle,” “Deutsches Requiem.” Film: Leni Riefenstahl, “The Triumph of the Will.”

Borges, reality and unreality; Judaism, the West, and the Latin American condition; representing the Holocaust.

Week 6: *Borges (cont.): Judaism, models of writing, and literary theory:* In *Pale to Pampas:* Selections from Scholem on the Kabbalah; Borges, “A Vindication of the Cabala,” “The Golem”; In Stavans, “Emma Zunz.”

Borges, Judaism and models of writing; the Bible and fantastic literature, Kabbalah and criticism.

Week 7: *Jacobo Timerman: Judaism and Testimonio:* Timerman, *Prisoner Without a Name, Cell Without a Number*; In *Pale to Pampas:* Foster, “Latin American Documentary Narrative,” article on Timerman and “Making Monuments in Argentina.” Film: “The Garden of Forking Paths” on Argentina and the disappeared.

Week 8: *Timerman (cont.)*

Entering Latin American history, or the end of the dream? The AMIA bombing and its aftermath: making monuments. Midterm.

Week 9: Spring Recess

Week 10: *The Holocaust and Latin American Culture: Agosín, A Cross and a Star;* In Stavans anthology: Szichman, “Remembrances of Things Future”; In *Pale to Pampas:* Horan, “Emigrant Memory”; Marianne Hirsch on the Holocaust and “post-memory.”

Jewishness and Latin American politics. Differences in Holocaust replays, North and South.

Week 11: Agosín (cont.): films: Bortnik, “Poor Butterfly,” documentary, “Threads of Hope” on Chile under Pinochet and the *arpilleras*.

Week 12: *Moacyr Scliar: Judaism and Magical Realism: Scliar, The Centaur in the Garden; In Pale to Pampas: Vieira, “Judaic Fiction in Brazil” and Chanady on Magical Realism.*

Viewing magical realism, minority and postcolonial discourse

Week 13: Scliar (cont.). Film: “18J” on the AMIA bombing.

Week 14: *Growing Up Sephardic in Mexico: Nissán, Like a Bride / Like a Mother. In Pale to Pampas: Lockhart, “Growing Up Jewish in Mexico”; Aizenberg, “Sephardim and Neo-Sephardim in Latin American Literature.” Selections on Ladino language.*

Week 15: Nissán (cont.): film: *Novia que te vea*

Week 16: Windup; Final paper due

Bibliography of Secondary Sources

Most available at NYU

- Marjorie Agosín, ed., *Memory, Oblivion, and Jewish Culture in Latin America*, U Texas P, 2005
- Passion, Memory, and Identity: Twentieth-Century Latin American Jewish Women Writers*, U of New Mexico P, 1999.
- Edna Aizenberg, *The Aleph Weaver, Biblical, Judaic, and Kabbalistic Elements in Borges*, Scripta Humanistica, 1984; *Borges el tejedor del Aleph*, Iberoamericana, 1997 (enlarged edition).
- Books and Bombs in Buenos Aires: Borges, Gerchunoff and Argentine Jewish Writing*, U P of New England, 2002.
- . *Borges and His Successors*, U of Missouri P, 1990.
- Astro, Alan, *Yiddish South of the Border*, U of New Mexico P, 2003.
- Lois Baer Barr, *Isaac Unbound: Patriarchal Traditions in the Latin American Jewish Novel*, Arizona SU, 1995.
- Robert Di Antonio and Nora Glickman, *Tradition and Innovation: Reflections on Latin American Jewish Writing*, SUNY P, 1993.
- Judith Laikin Elkin, *The Jews of Latin America*, Revised ed. Holmes & Meier, 1998.
- Ricardo Feierstein, ed., *Alberto Gerchunoff: judío y gaucho*. Milá, 2000.
- Nora Glickman, ed. *Argentine Jewish Writers: Critical Essays*, MJS Books, Queens Coll., 1993.
- Nora Glickman and Gloria Waldman, eds., *Argentine Jewish Theater: A Critical Anthology*, Bucknell UP, 1996.
- Goldemberg, Isaac, *El gran libro de América judía*, , 1998.
- Naomi Lindstrom, *Jewish Issues in Argentine Literature*, U of Missouri P, 1989.
- Darrell B. Lockhart, *Jewish Writers of Latin America: A Dictionary*, Garland, 1997.
- Gerald Martin, *Journeys Through the Labyrinth: Latin American Fiction in the Twentieth Century*, Verso, 1989.
- Ruggiero, Kristin, *The Jewish Diaspora in Latin America and the Caribbean: Fragments of Memory*, Sussex Academic P, 2005.
- Senkman, Leonardo. *La identidad judía en la literatura argentina*, Pardes, 1983.
- Sosnowski, Saúl, *La orilla inminente: escitores judíos argentinos*, Legasa, 1987.
- David Sheinin and Lois Barr, *The Jewish Diaspora in Latin America*, Garland, 1996.
- Stavans, Ilan, ed. *The Cross and the Scroll: A Jewish Hispanic Reader*, Routledge, 2002.
- Nelson H.Vieira, *Jewish Voices in Brazilian Literature*, UP of Florida, 1995.
- Robert Weisbrot, *The Jews of Argentina*, JPS, 1979.