

Judaic Studies JDT 399 CRN 22788
Winter 2008
MW 16:00-17:50 @ 112 Esslinger
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Office hours: W 2-3:30, another TBD +by appointment @ 222 Chapman Hall

The Jewish Diaspora in Latin America

Content:

The coupling of the terms “Jew” and “Latino,” or “Jewish” and “Latin American” still elicits surprise and disbelief, especially among those who grew accustomed to identifying “Jewish” with “Eastern European.” However, a growing corpus of Jewish and Latin American literature increasingly demands that we acknowledge and confront both the Jewish contribution to the make-up of the Latin American cultural fabric, and the relevance of Latin American realities in shaping a distinctive Jewish identity. This course will study the presence of Jews in Latin America, the construction and representation of Jewish identity, as well as the relationships established between Jews and non-Jews in different Latin American countries.

Objectives:

- Understand the diversity of the Latin American experience.
- Have a broad and diverse spectrum of the ethnicities, languages and cultures in Latin America.
- Understand the role of Jews in the formation of Latin American countries, acknowledging their presence and participation in the very enterprise of colonization.
- Recognize intra-Jewish difference and diversity.
- Understand that the Jewish experience and identity in Latin America cannot be dissociated from the recent violent history of the continent.
- Recognize the connections established by Latin American Jewish authors between a Jewish past of expulsion and Inquisition and a Latin American present of immigration and military dictatorships.
- Examine the enormous impact of Jewish immigrants on the social, economic, political, and, especially, the intellectual and cultural life of Latin America and, specifically, Argentina.
- Examine, through a careful analysis of principal literary works, the role of Argentine Jews in what remains today one of the great immigrant societies of Latin America.
- Observe how issues of memory, migration and hybridization play out in Jewish Latin American literature.
- Recognize the gender differences in migratory and minority experiences.
- Discuss the ambiguities and tensions in the process of national identity formation.
- Understand how Jewish cultural production is woven into the fabric of national culture in Latin America.

Methodology:

This course will focus on representations of Jewishness and Jewish identity by Jews and to some degree by non-Jews as well. It will also observe the historical and the present relationship between Jews and non-Jews in Latin America and more specifically in Argentina, the largest Jewish community on the continent. The main corpus will be literary texts, but the course will also cover historical narratives and a larger cultural production, including music, fine arts, theatre and cinema—all of which makes it interdisciplinary. We will discuss issues of identity, immigration, memory, assimilation, diaspora and nationalism.

The course's format combines lectures with a seminar-style class, where discussions both in and outside the class, as well as collaborative work, are encouraged. My lectures will at various moments include the use of music, photos and illustrations. Films will be in English or have English subtitles. Class is taught in English, but I will provide Spanish versions of the poetry and of most of the prose texts (Scliar's novel and Rawet's and Lispector's short-stories were written in Portuguese, and I can also provide these if there is interest). Class discussions will be very important in this course.

Evaluation:

- 1) Reading and preparation of assigned material for each class
- 2) Participation in class discussions and other activities
- 3) 10-12 minute group oral presentation, with abstract
- 4) Mid-term exam
- 5) Final 6-8-page paper (can be substituted with alternative final project upon discussion with instructor)

Students taking the course for credit in Spanish need to write the paper in Spanish. Those taking it for Honors College credit need to write an extra 4-5-page paper—date to be determined.

ON THE THIRD AND FOURTH WEEKS EVERY STUDENT HAS TO MEET ME IN MY OFFICE TO ASK ME QUESTIONS AND ASSESS HOW S/HE IS DOING IN THE CLASS. THERE WILL BE A SIGN-UP SHEET ON MY DOOR.

Oral Presentation: We will pretend to be organizing a conference on Latin American Jewish Studies. Each group of three students will form a panel and will write a general abstract for the panel, as well as an individual abstract for each of the papers in the panel. Preferably the papers will dialogue among themselves, will have a recognizable theme which allows them to be placed in the same panel, and will engage a critical question about one or more artistic texts. During the oral presentations students will briefly explain what their paper is about and how it is developed. Therefore, there shouldn't be any biographies of authors or retelling or paraphrasing of stories. A copy of the abstracts should be handed out to the instructor and the other students.

Grading

Exam: 30%
Paper: 40%
Oral Presentation with abstract: 20%
Participation and homework: 10%

Grade Scale

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|----|------|-----|
| A+ | 10.0 | 100 |
| A | 9.4 | 94 |
| A- | 9 | 90 |
| B+ | 8.7 | 87 |
| B | 8.3 | 83 |
| B- | 8 | 80 |
| C+ | 7.7 | 77 |
| C | 7.3 | 73 |
| C- | 7 | 70 |
| D+ | 6.7 | 67 |
| D | 6.3 | 63 |
| D- | 6 | 60 |
| F | 5 | 50 |

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| A+ = 4.3 | B+ = 3.3 | C+ = 2.3 | D+ = 1.3 |
| A = 4.0 | B = 3.0 | C = 2.0 | D = 1.0 |
| A- = 3.7 | B- = 2.7 | C- = 1.7 | D- = 0.7 |

Reading material:

Required Texts:

Alberto Gerchunoff, *The Jewish Gauchos of the Pampas*
Moacyr Scliar, *The Strange Nation of Rafael Mendes*
Ricardo Feierstein, *Mestizo, A Novel*
Ana María Shua, *The Book of Memories*
Ilán Stavans (ed.), *Tropical Synagogues*

Films:

Novia que te vea
La historia oficial
Esperando al Mesias
Sol de Otoño

Course-packet with poetry and secondary/critical texts selected by the instructor. It can be found on Blackboard under "Course Reader," in "Course Documents." Texts will be selected in large part from the following bibliography.

Selected bibliography:

Sachar, Howard M. "A Foothold in the Early Americas," in *A History of the Jews in America*. New York: Alfred Knopf, 1992, pp. 9-16.

Lerner, Ira T. *Mexican Jewry in the Land of the Aztecs*. Ciudad de Mexico: B. Costamic, 1967. (excerpts)

Stillman, Yedida K. and George KM Zucker. *New Horizons of Sephardic Studies*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1993.

Elkin, Judith Laikin. *The Jews of Latin America*. New York/London: Holmes & Meier, [1980] 1998, pp.71-102, pp.131-158, pp.215-229, pp.251~281.

Elkin, Judith Laikin and Merx, Gilbert W. (eds.) *The Jewish Presence in Latin America*. Boston: Alien & Unwin, 1987.

Aizenberg, Edna "Introduction" & "Forward" to *Parricide on the Pampas?: A New Study and Translation of Alberto Gerschunoffs Los gauchos judios*. Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2003.

Manuel F. Medina, "Imaging a Space in Between: Writing the Gap between Jewish and Mexican Identities in Rosa Nissan's Narrative"

Weisbrot, Robert. *The Jews of Argentina*. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1979, pp. 3-11 and pictures.

Rawet, Samuel. *The Prophet and Other Stories*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998.

Lockhart, Darrell B. "Introduction." *Jewish Writers of Latin America-A Dictionary*. New York/London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1997, pp. xi-xxxiii. :

DiAntonio, Robert and Nora Glickman (eds.). *Tradition and Innovation*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1993, pp. 1-8.

Friedman, Edward H. "Theory in the Margin: Latin American Literature and the Jewish Subject," in *The Jewish Diaspora in Latin America*, pp. 21-31.

Sosnowski, Saul. "Latin American-Jewish Writers: Protecting the Hyphen," in *The Jewish Presence in Latin America*, pp. 297-307.

_____. "Latin American-Jewish Writers: A Bridge toward History," in *Prooftexts* 4:1 (January 1984), pp. 71-92.

Glickman, Nora. "Jewish Women Writers in Latin America," in Baskin, Judith, ed., *Women of the Word*, Detroit, Mi: Wayne State University Press, 1994; pp. 299-322.

Stephen A Sadow (ed). *King David's Harp: Autobiographical Essays by Jewish Latin American Writers*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1999.

Senkman, Leonardo. "Jewish Latin American Writers and Collective Memory," in *Tradition and Innovation*, pp. 33-43.

Vieira, Nelson. "Outsiders and Insiders: Brazilian Jews and the Discourse of Alterity," in *The Jewish Diaspora in Latin America*, pp. 101-116.

Poetry:

Juan Gelman, "Customs," "The Knife," & "The Stranger" Prayer"

Isaac Goldemberg, "BarMitzvah" & "The Jews in Hell"

Cesar Tiempo, "The Jewish Cemetery"

Angelina Muñiz-Hubermann, "Manuscripto" (Manuscript)

"Obsesion" (Obsession)

Tamara Kamenzain, "Las Trenzass de la Torah" (Torah Braids)

"Eliahu"

"Retorno II" (Return II)

"Mea Shearim"

Alejandra Pizarnik, "Estar" (Existing)

"Laterna Sorda" (Deaf Lantern)

Nora Strejilevich, "Cuando me Robaron el Nombre" (When They Robbed me of my Name)

Juan Gelman, "Commentary VI (Saint Teresa)" & Commentary XX"

"Under Foreign Rain (Footnotes to Defeat)" "Exergue"

"The Cradle"

"Psalm" & "What Will Come to Pass"

"The Expulsed" & "The Prisoner"

"Song" 85 "The Battle"

"In Prison"

Schedule: (Subject to Revision)

Week 1 *Introduction*

- 1/7 Presentation, Introductory activities
- 1/9 Early history of Jews in Latin America: colonization and Inquisition
Reading: Howard Sachar & Eva Alexandra Uchmany & Judith Laikin Elkin
Saúl Sosnowski: "...Protecting the Hyphen"

Week 2 *Mythic Creations: Re-writing of history in Brazil*

- 1/14 Reading: *The Strange Nation of Rafael Mendes*, Moacyr Scliar
- 1/16 Short additional biographical information on the author: *Jewish Writers of Latin America*: Moacyr Scliar; *King David's Harp*: Moacyr Scliar

Week 3 *Mythic Creations: Re-writing of history in Argentina*

- 1/21 **No Class: MLK**
- 1/23 Reading: *The Jewish Gauchos of the Pampas*, Alberto Gerchunoff
Short additional biographical information on the author: *Jewish Writers of Latin America*: Alberto Gerchunoff; *King David's Harp*: Alberto Gerchunoff

Week 4 *Contemporary Jewish Identity I*

- 1/28 Reading: *Mestizo, A Novel*, Ricardo Feierstein
- 1/30 **Mid-term exam**

Week 5 *Contemporary Jewish Identity II*

- 2/4 Reading: *Mestizo, A Novel*, Ricardo Feierstein
- 2/6 Short additional biographical information on the author: *Jewish Writers of Latin America*: Ricardo Feierstein; *King David's Harp*: Ricardo Feierstein

Week 6 *"Jewish, Latin American, woman, writer, in this order or any other"*

- 2/11 Reading: *The Book of Memories*, Ana María Shua
- 2/13 Short additional biographical information on the author: *Jewish Writers of Latin America*: Ana María Shua (483-87)

Week 7 *"Jewish, Latin American, woman, writer, in this order or any other"* Take 2

- 2/18 Reading: Short Stories by Clarice Lispector –from *Tropical Synagogues* and other sources
- 2/20 Excerpts from Rosa Nissán's novel *Novia que te vea/Bride to Be*
Novia que te vea/Bride to Be: Film

Week 8 *Poetry*

- 2/25 Angelina Muñiz-Huberman, Alejandra Pizarnik, Tamara Kamenszain, Nora Strejilevitch, Juan Gelman
- 2/27 Paintings
La Historia oficial (The Official Story): Film

Week 9 *Poetry and Tango*

3/3 Gelman

3/5 Tango, Yiddish Tango, Poetry in Ladino

? Party?

Week 10

3/10 Oral Presentations

3/12 Oral Presentations

Final discussions

Esperando al Mesias (Waiting for the Messiah): Film

Finals Week

Final paper due: 3/20 @3:15PM