

Spring 2022 Course Syllabus

**Jewish Identities in the Americas**

LAH 351T (30720)

JS 363 (39000)

Course carries a Global Cultures Flag and a Cultural Diversity Flag

Meets: MWF 10:00-10:50, CAL 221

Instructor: Naomi Lindstrom, Professor of Spanish and Portuguese  
(lindstrom@austin.utexas.edu)

Consultation: Please make an appointment to consult via Zoom or phone; e-mail anytime

Consultation hours: MWF 2:00-3:00

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Required Texts: Readings posted in Canvas; film clips will be shown in class and a link posted if available; some films, as indicated, are available free through Kanopy. Please consult Canvas for readings and study them in advance of class.

January

19 Introduction to course: its aims, criteria, and expectations

21 Historical overview of Jewish life in the Americas  
Guidelines for preparing term paper proposal

24 What is Jewish life and identity?  
Englander, "What We Talk About When We Talk About Anne Frank"  
"What Is Jewish Literature?"

26 Brief introduction to Jewish observances and customs

28 Jewish languages; the literary revival of Ladino; Shua, "The Language"

31 Immigration (North): Cahan, "A Providential Match"; Lazarus, "The New Colossus"

February

2 Immigration (South): Muñiz-Huberman, "The Pirates' Cook"  
Gerchunoff, excerpt from *The Jewish Gauchos*

4 Cahan, "A Sweatshop Romance"; Alpersohn, "Of Pimps, Prostitutes, and Other Seducers"

7 Shua, "Almost Like America" and "The Name Rimetka"

9 Canadian Jewish Writers: Richler, "The Street"; A. M. Klein, poetry

By midnight on Thurs. Feb. 10: Circulate draft of term paper proposal to other students and instructor by uploading it to Discussions. You will receive feedback in class from peers on Feb. 16 and also an individual message from the instructor with suggestions for improvement. The draft is required but will not be assigned a grade.

11 Popular music, Jewish composers and performers (North)  
Irving Berlin, George Gershwin, Al Jolson

14 Popular music, Jewish composers and performers (South)  
Jews and the Tango  
Jével Katz

16 Peer feedback exercise: workshopping of term paper proposals in breakout groups.  
Instructions will be given in class.

18 Mestizo Jewish communities; Jews of Color. Scenes from *The Fire Within*

21 Students present central concept of term paper in class: **strict 3 minute limit**

23 Glantz, segments #1 and #3 from *The Family Tree*

By midnight: *upload revised proposal of topic for term paper to Assignments. This version will be evaluated for a grade.*

25 Emergence of second generation North American Jewish culture  
Yeziarska, "The Fat of the Land" and "America and I"

28 Review for first examination

March

2 First examination administered on line. Students first meet with instructor on Zoom to go over the questions and instructions, then have 24 hours to complete their answers and submit them via Assignments in Canvas.

4 Scenes from the film *A Serious Man* directed by Joel and Ethan Coen

7 The Holocaust and its impact (North)  
Malamud, "The German Refugee"

9 The Holocaust and its impact (South)  
Glantz, segment #2 from *The Family Tree*  
Rawet, "The Prophet"

11 No new readings. Students may consult with instructor about their term papers or any other aspects of the course

Spring Break March 12-20

21 Songwriters and performers (North): Bob Dylan and Leonard Cohen

23 Songwriters and performers (South): Jorge Drexler and Fortuna

25 Big Names in post-WWII U.S. Jewish Literature I:  
Bellow, "Cousins"

28 Big Names in post-WWII U.S. Jewish Literature II:  
Roth, "Defender of the Faith"

30 Ozick, "The Pagan Rabbi"

April

1 Jews and Human Rights: Timmerman, two excerpts from from *Prisoner without a Name, Cell without a Number*

4 More recent Jewish American writers: Shteyngart, excerpt from *Little Failure*

6 Jewish life in small or far-flung communities:  
Goodman, "The Succession"  
Agosín, "Osorno"

8 Scenes from film *The Last Laugh* (available through Kanopy service at UT Libraries)

11 Inter-American Jewish Writers:  
Behar, "Juban América"

13 Inter-American Writers:  
Spitzer, two excerpts from *Hotel Bolivia*

15 Current-day antisemitism: Horn, excerpt from *They Love Dead Jews*

18 review for second examination

20 second and last examination. Examination will be administered on line following the same procedure as the first examination

22 Decompression day! Jewish humor in video clips

25 scenes from film *Nora's Will*, directed by Mariana Chenillo (available through Kanopy service at UT Libraries)

27 Student presentations of term papers

29 Student presentations of term papers

May

2 Student presentations of term papers

4 Student presentations of term papers

6 Final wrap-up discussion

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Grading Criteria:

- Proposal of topic for term paper: 15%
- First examination: 25%
- Second examination: 20%
- Final version of term paper: 35% (5% oral, 30% written)
- Participation in class, drafts, prompts, and quizzes: 5%

Attendance Policy: Attendance is expected. If you are unable to attend, please send the instructor a message explaining your absence and how you will keep up with the class. *Please remember that if you are not feeling well, you should stay home to avoid spreading illness; you will not be penalized for missing class for this reason.*

The following scale will be used to determine your final grade in the course:

93-100 = A	83-86.99 = B	73-76.99 = C	63-66.99 = D
90-92.99 = A-	80-82.99 = B-	70-72.99 = C-	60-62.99 = D-
87-89.99 = B+	77-79.99 = C+	67-69.99 = D+	0-59.99 = F

Though they will not be graded for grammar, examinations, quizzes, and papers must be written clearly enough to be understood. The final paper should be around 2000 words (approx. 8-9 pages) in length, not counting the bibliography, and must cover a topic and readings that are not already covered in class sessions (see syllabus of readings, below). The paper must have to do with some aspect of Jewish culture in Latin America, the U.S., or Canada. It may (but not necessarily) be comparative in nature and cover more than one region. The paper topic must be cultural in nature, and not oriented toward technical or business subjects. You may write about literature, music, film, the visual arts, architecture, or any other form of cultural expression, including religion. The term paper must not be about one of the works included in the course

syllabus, though it may be about a different work by the same author, director, composer, or artist.

## Outcomes

When you complete this class, you may expect to:

- \* Have had a brief introduction to Jewish history, life, and customs in the Americas
- \* Have been exposed to and analyzed a wide-ranging sample of Jewish film, writing, and popular song from North and South America
- \* Have gained experience researching and writing an independent project on some aspect of Jewish cultural production in the Americas

## Modality, Flags, Accommodations, Religious Holidays, Emergencies, Scholastic Dishonesty

- \* This course has been planned for face-to-face meetings except for two examinations administered online. If changes in modality are needed, we will follow guidance from the University.
- This course carries a Global Cultures flag. Global Cultures courses are designed to increase your familiarity with cultural groups outside the United States. You should therefore expect a substantial portion of your grade to come from assignments covering the practices, beliefs, and histories of at least one non-U.S. cultural group, past or present.
- It also carries a Cultural Diversity in the U.S. flag. This means that we examine the culture, perspectives, and history of an underrepresented cultural group in the United States.
- Please note that all graded work done inside or outside of class must be your own. Writing that appears to be the work of someone else (*e.g.* a friend, a Web or print source) and may entail severe penalties beyond just a zero on the particular assignment. Students who violate University rules on academic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the university. For more information, visit <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/>. **We strictly abide by the UT Honor Code < <http://registrar.utexas.edu/catalogs/gi09-10/ch01/index.html>> on questions of scholastic dishonesty.**
- **Students with disabilities may request appropriate academic accommodations from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities, 471-6259 <http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/>.**
- **Students seeking assistance with writing may wish to contact The Undergraduate Writing Center <http://uwc.utexas.edu/handouts>.**
- **Medical assistance/ counseling services are available at <http://www.cmhc.utexas.edu/>.**
- If you miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holiday, you will be given an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

- Occupants of buildings on The University of Texas at Austin campus are required to evacuate buildings when a fire alarm is activated. Alarm activation or announcement requires exiting and assembling outside. Familiarize yourself with all exit doors of each classroom and building you may occupy. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when entering the building. Students requiring assistance in evacuation shall inform their instructor in writing during the first week of class. In the event of an evacuation, follow the instruction of faculty or class instructors. Do not re-enter a building unless given instructions by the following: Austin Fire Department, The University of Texas at Austin Police Department, or Fire Prevention Services office. Information regarding emergency evacuation routes and emergency procedures can be found at <http://www.utexas.edu/emergency>