

San José State University
History Department, Humanities, Jewish Studies
JWSS/HIST/HUM 111, JEWS AND POPULAR CULTURE
Fall semester 2010

Instructor:	Donny Inbar, Ph.D.
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Office Hours:	Mondays, 5:30-6:00 pm (by appt. only)
Class Days/Time:	M 18:00-20:45
Classroom:	DMH (Dudley Moorhead Hall) 167

Faculty Web Page and MYSJSU Messaging

Copies of the course materials such as the syllabus, major assignment handouts, etc. will all be uploaded to the web. URL will be provided towards the beginning of the Fall 2010 semester.

Course Description

What is modern Jewish identity? “Religion or ethnicity? Theology or ethics? Culture or ideology? Brooklyn or Tel Aviv?” (A. O. Scott, “Jewish History, Popcorn Included,” *The New York Times*, 10/4/09). How does popular Jewish culture redefine Judaism, and how did the arts serve as a powerful agent of secularization and acculturation in the modern era? Once people began to see that “Jewishness” was not necessarily determined by the fulfillment of the 613 biblical commandments or by tribal orientation, it began to be seen as an evolving culture. In this course we will explore the trend of secularization through the arts, studying cultural and national Judaism as they are manifested in the United States and Israel. The course will include film screenings, music, and reading of literature, history and theory, from “good old” modern Judaism to cutting-edge “rebooted” Jewishness.

Students will be required to read and prepare for each session. Each student will be required to prepare one or two short presentations on one or two of the topics, which can be developed into their final project.

Course Goals and Student Learning Objectives

This interdisciplinary course is intended for students whose interests may include Judaism, religion in general, history, literature and the arts. It will provide both core knowledge of modern Judaism and a specific look into various aspects of Jewish popular culture. At the end of the academic journey of the evolution of secular or cultural Judaism, you will be better equipped to understand the uniqueness of modern Judaism and to appreciate the role that Jewish culture plays in our modern (or postmodern) world.

GE/SJSU Studies Learning Outcomes (LO), if applicable

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

LO1 Better grasp and conduct multi- and inter-disciplinary research

LO2 Come up with more creative and personalized project content

Course Content Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

LO3 Understand various facets of Judaism, including history, religion and culture

LO4 Feel more comfortable and knowledgeable about contemporary popular arts & culture

Required Texts/Readings

Textbook

The comprehensive reader for this course (with vast majority of texts: historical, literary, documents, plays & other) will be available online.

In addition:

Sholem Aleichem (Aliza Shevrin, trans.). *Wandering Stars*. New York: Viking Press, 2009. ISBN -10: B002HOQ94I, ISBN -13: B002HOQ94I.

In addition, students will be asked to watch some films (available either from SJSU library or from Netflix).

Classroom Protocol

I will conduct this class more in the format of a seminar than a series of frontal lectures. Therefore both attendance and participation are of high importance. Class will start at 6:00 pm prompt (and students are expected to be ready on time). The fact that a major component of this course is “fun stuff” and popular/light materials, should not mislead any of us: the discussions are serious, and the accumulation of knowledge and understanding in order to better contextualize everything and grasp a historical/cultural process and evolution will be both fascinating and demanding. Films and music will be the only electronic devices permitted in class. Cell phone & texting are not welcome.

Dropping and Adding

Students are responsible for understanding the policies and procedures about add/drop, grade forgiveness, etc. Please consult the current semester’s [Catalog Policies](http://info.sjsu.edu/static/catalog/policies.html) section at <http://info.sjsu.edu/static/catalog/policies.html>. Add/drop deadlines can be found on the [current academic calendar](http://www.sjsu.edu/academic_programs/calendars/academic_calendar/) web page located at http://www.sjsu.edu/academic_programs/calendars/academic_calendar/. The [Late Drop Policy](http://www.sjsu.edu/aars/policies/latedrops/policy/) is available at <http://www.sjsu.edu/aars/policies/latedrops/policy/>. Students should be aware of the current deadlines and penalties for dropping classes.

Information about the latest changes and news is available at the [Advising Hub](http://www.sjsu.edu/advising/) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/advising/>.

Assignments and Grading Policy

Participation in class*	15%
Presentations in class	25%
Final exam	30%
Research paper	30%

Extra credit will be available upon the work on especially ambitious projects.

Final paper is due on the last day of class
Date for final exam TBD

* Participation will be evaluated upon contribution to discussions, knowledge of reading assignments and creative thinking.

University Policies

Academic integrity

Your commitment as a student to learning is evidenced by your enrollment at San Jose State University. The [University's Academic Integrity policy](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/S07-2.htm), located at <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/S07-2.htm>, requires you to be honest in all your academic course work. Faculty members are required to report all infractions to the office of Student Conduct and Ethical Development. The [Student Conduct and Ethical Development website](http://www.sa.sjsu.edu/judicial_affairs/index.html) is available at http://www.sa.sjsu.edu/judicial_affairs/index.html.

Instances of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Cheating on exams or plagiarism (presenting the work of another as your own, or the use of another person's ideas without giving proper credit) will result in a failing grade and sanctions by the University. For this class, all assignments are to be completed by the individual student unless otherwise specified. If you would like to include your assignment or any material you have submitted, or plan to submit for another class, please note that SJSU's Academic Policy S07-2 requires approval of instructors.

Campus Policy in Compliance with the American Disabilities Act

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, or if you need to make special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible, or see me during office hours. Presidential Directive 97-03 requires that students with disabilities requesting accommodations must register with the [Disability Resource Center](http://www.drc.sjsu.edu/) (DRC) at <http://www.drc.sjsu.edu/> to establish a record of their disability.

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Week	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
1	8/30/10	<p>Introduction Theories of Secularization, overview of the course, basic definitions of Jewish cultures, arts, leisure and secularization. Historical survey of the relationship between religious Judaism and the various art-forms since biblical and Talmudic times. <u>Screening:</u> “East and West” (1923) <u>Reading:</u> a. Biale, David (ed.). <i>Cultures of the Jews</i>. pp. xvii-xxxiii b. Whitfield, Stephen J. <i>In Search of American Jewish Culture</i>. 1-31 c. Sarna, Jonathan. “The Rise, Fall, and Rebirth of Secular Judaism”</p>
2	9/13/10	<p>Uriel Acosta and the Case of Rebels and Traitors A short historical survey of “otherness” in Jewish chronicles (atheists, rebels, the women of the literary salons in Berlin and converts) will lead to the presentation of the two “paths” of influence, that of Baruch Spinoza and his philosophy, and the other of Uriel Acosta and his personal (melo)drama. a. Acosta, Uriel, <i>A Specimen of Human Life</i> b. Gutzkow, Karl, <i>Uriel Acosta: A Tragedy in Five Acts</i> c. Yovel, Yirmiyahu, <i>Spinoza and Other Heretics: The Marrano of Reason/the Adventures of Immanence</i>, chapters 1 & 7</p>
3	9/20/10	<p>The Haskalah and the birth of liberal and anti-religious arts The German and Eastern-European Haskalah projects and the questions of liberalization vs. secularization, acculturation vs. assimilation. a. Meyer, Michael A. <i>Jewish Identity in the Modern World</i>, “Enlightenment,” 10-32 b. Feiner, Shmuel, <i>Haskalah and History: the Emergence of a Modern Jewish Historical Consciousness</i>, “Reaching the Masses,” 204-273. c. Cohen, Tova, “Reality and Refraction in Description of Women in Haskalah Fiction,” in Feiner, Shmuel & David Sorkin (eds.), <i>New Perspectives on the Haskalah</i>, pp. 144-165</p>
4	9/27/10	<p>The Arts as an Anti-Religious Force; Turning the Matchmaker into a Villain The development of Jewish anti-religious poems and satire, focusing on arranged marriages vs. free choice in love as a key factor in the campaign against the hegemony of Rabbinic Judaism. <u>Screening:</u> from “The Two Kuni Lemls”</p>

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		<p>a. (Watching) "Fiddler on the Roof"</p> <p>b. Biale, David. <i>Eros and the Jews, From Biblical Israel to Contemporary America</i>, "Eros and Enlightenment," 149-175</p> <p>c. Linetski, Isaac Joel, <i>The Polish Lad</i>, 127-163</p> <p>d. Sholem Aleichem, <i>Tevye the Dairyman and The Railroad Stories</i>, "Today's Children," 35-52</p> <p>e. Abraham Goldfaden, "The Jolly Hasid"; Yehuda Leyb Gordon, "Awake, My People"; Mikhl Gordon, "Awake, My People"; Abraham Goldfaden, "Awake, My People" (poems)</p>
5	10/4/10	<p>From the <i>Bimah</i> to the <i>Bine</i>: The Stage as an Alternative to the Synagogue</p> <p>The performing arts played a significant factor in the secularization of Jews, as an establishment that set a potent secular alternative to the synagogue and became the new center of Jewish social and cultural life, from Germany through the Pale of Settlement to America.</p> <p><u>Screening</u>: "The Dybbuk" (1937)</p> <p>a. Sandrow, Nahma. <i>Vagabond Stars: A World History of Yiddish Theater</i>, "Avrom Goldfadn," 40-69, "Vagabond Stars," 70-90, "Shund and Popular Theater," 91-131</p> <p>b. Hapgood, Hutchins, <i>The Spirit of the Ghetto: Studies of the Jewish Quarter of New York</i> [1902], "The Stage," 118-175</p> <p>c. Howe, Irving. <i>World of our Fathers</i>, "The Yiddish Theatre," 463-496</p>
6	10/11/10	<p>Counter-Secularization on stage and in the Arts: The return to religious motifs</p> <p>A trend in popular Jewish culture may seem as a reactionary move in terms of secularization: the increasing return of religious, ritual, biblical and messianic motifs into secular works of art.</p> <p>a. Mendelsohn, Ezra. <i>Painting People: Maurycy Gottlieb and Jewish Art</i>, "Artistic Contexts," 45-82</p> <p>b. S. Ansky, <i>The Dybbuk and Other Writings</i>, 1-49</p> <p>c. Biale, David. "A Journey Between Worlds: East European Jewish Culture from the Partitions of Poland to the Holocaust" in <i>Cultures of the Jews</i>, 799-862</p> <p>d. Mapu, Abraham, <i>The Shepherd Prince [Love of Zion]: a Historical Romance of the Days of Isaiah</i>, chapters 1-7.</p> <p>e. Mapu, Abraham, <i>Love of Zion</i>, chapters 25-32.</p> <p>f. Manger, Itzik, <i>The World According to Itzik: Selected Poetry and Prose</i>, 3-24</p> <p>g. Abraham Goldfaden, "Sabbath, First of Month and Holiday" (poem)</p>
7	10/18/10	<p>Cantors as Bridge and the Myth-Match of <i>The Jazz Singer</i> (I)</p> <p>One of the most potent motifs, since the Haskalah literature, is that of the cantor who tragically "crosses the lines," and becomes a</p>

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		<p>secular entertainer. The theme reached its pinnacle with the Jewish American <i>The Jazz Singer</i>. We will investigate the truth behind this powerful motif.</p> <p>a. Shandler, Jeffrey. "Cantors on Trial," in <i>Jews, God and Videotape: Religion and Media in America</i>, 13-55.</p> <p>b. Sholom Aleichem, <i>Wandering Stars</i> book to be purchased by students</p>
8	10/25/10	<p>Cantors as Bridge and the Myth-Match of <i>The Jazz Singer</i> (II) <u>Screening: "The Jazz Singer"</u></p> <p>a. Hoberman, J. <i>Bridge of Light: Yiddish Film Between Two Worlds</i>, "Making it in America," 113-121.</p> <p>b. Hoberman, J. <i>Bridge of Light: Yiddish Film Between Two Worlds</i>, "The Cantor's Sons," 257-273.</p> <p>c. Hoberman, J. and Jeffrey Shandler, <i>Entertaining America: Jews, Movies and Broadcasting</i>, 45-99.</p> <p>d. Samson Raphaelson. <i>The Jazz Singer</i> (play), Act II, 63-117 or</p> <p>e. Carringer, Robert L. (ed. and intro.), Alfred Abraham Cohn, Samson Raphaelson. "The Jazz Singer" (screenplay), 47-141.</p>
9	11/1/10	<p>American Judaism: The Hollywood & Broadway Model As Jews were integrating in American society, one of their most notable achievements was gaining a dominant position in show business, both in New York (theater) and Hollywood (cinema). Concurrent with this almost "takeover," the image of the Jew became somewhat closeted.</p> <p>a. Whitfield, Stephen J. "Declaration of Independence: American Jewish Culture in the Twentieth Century," in Biale, David (ed.). <i>Cultures of the Jews</i>, 1098-1146.</p> <p>b. Friedman, Lester D., <i>The Jewish Image in American Film: 70 Years of Hollywood's Vision of Jewish Characters and Themes</i>, The Sixties, 161-189, The Seventies, 190-225.</p> <p>c. Schiff, Ellen. <i>From Stereotype to Metaphor: The Jew in Contemporary Drama</i>, 1-35.</p>
10	11/8/10	<p>Zionism: Can Jewish Land and Language replace Religion? In Palestine, and later Israel, Jewish nationhood & the revived Hebrew language strove to replace religion and ritual as markers of Jewish identity. On this new secular Judaism and Tel Aviv as its new cultural capital.</p> <p>a. Stevans, Ilan, <i>Resurrecting Hebrew</i>, <u>TBA</u></p> <p>b. Harshav, Benjamin. <i>Language in Time of Revolution</i>, 133-172</p> <p>c. Azaryahu, Maoz. <i>Tel Aviv: Mythography of a City</i>, "Myth and the City," 15-29, "The First Hebrew City," 33-71, "Nonstop City," 127-155, "Sheinkin Street," 156-171.</p> <p>d. Almog, Oz. <i>The Sabra: The Creation of the New Jew</i>, 1-22</p> <p>e. Segev, Tom, <i>Elvis in Jerusalem: Post-Zionism and the</i></p>

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		<i>Americanization of Israel.</i>
11	11/15/10	<p>Secularizing the Bible and Holy-days: Hellenistic victory over the Hasmonean</p> <p>This session, continuing the previous exploration of the Zionist secularization and re-appropriation of Jewish taboos, will delve deeper into the artistic secularization of the Bible, through Hebrew poetry, prose and drama, the biblical art of Adi Nes and their sacrilegious manipulation of the sacred. It will further explore the secularization of holidays, beginning with American Jewish lyricist-composer Irving Berlin, who universalized Christian holidays (<i>White Christmas, Easter Parade</i>). It will then explore the secularization of Jewish holidays in Israel and America, the transformation of religious festivals into agricultural or environmental celebrations, and will focus on one traditional Hanukkah song that tells the story of three almost unrelated holidays in its original Yiddish, English and Hebrew translations.</p> <p>a. Shalev, Meir. <i>In the Beginning: First Times in the Bible</i>, “Introduction,” “The First Love.”</p> <p>b. Goldfaden, <i>Bar Kochba: or The Last Hour of Zion</i> (synopsis)</p> <p>c. Chevlowe, Susan. “Adi Nes’s Biblical Stories”</p> <p>d. Levin, Hanoach, <i>The Torments of Job</i> (play)</p> <p>e. Levin Hanoach. “The Akeda”; “The Creation” (2 short pieces)</p>
12	11/22/10	<p>Rebooting Judaism, reinventing Judaism & Judeokitch</p> <p><u>Student presentations on new Jewish movements, trends and publications.</u></p> <p>Postmodern deconstructivist times call for the rebirth of Judaism among the young generations. From secular, political and deconstructivist approaches to the trendy, camp and most superficial. Can Judaism turn into tree-hugging and Yiddish into a funny coffee cup?</p> <p><u>Optional topics for presentation:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. www.heebmagazine.com 2. www.jewcy.com 3. www.hazon.org 4. www.pjalliance.org/ 5. www.rebooters.net 6. www.zeek.net/ 7. www.tabletmag.com/ 8. www.chochmat.org/ (Chochmat Halev, Berkeley) 9. www.thecooljew.net/ 10. www.tikkun.org/ 11. www.thecjm.org, The Contemporary Jewish Museum, SF; Daniel Libeskind’s architecture.

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		12. Mitzvah on the Rocks 13. <i>JudaiKitsch: Tchotchkes, Schmattes and Nosherei</i> Reading: a. Chabon, Michael. "Imaginary Homelands," in <i>Maps and Legends</i> , 169-191. b. Shandler, Jeffrey. <i>Adventures in Yiddishland</i> , 1-30.
13	11/29/10	Jewish Humor: Is American Humor Jewish or is this a Bad Joke? <u>Student presentations on Jewish comedians</u> From The <i>foyst</i> Jewish entertainers on Broadway to Jon Stewart and Sarah Silverman: what defines Jewish humor, how did it influence American comedy, and does it still rein what's funny in the U.S.? Optional entertainers: 1. Sophie Tucker 2. Eddie Cantor 3. Al Jolson 4. Fanny Brice 5. Mel Brooks 6. Milton Berle 7. Marx Brothers 8. Jack Benny 9. Jerry Lewis 10. Barbra Streisand 11. Lenny Bruce 12. Woody Allen 13. Neil Simon 14. Joan Rivers 15. Goldie Hawn 16. Billy Crystal 17. Jerry Seinfeld 18. Larry David 19. Sandra Bernhardt 20. Adam Sandler 21. Sarah Silverman 22. Jon Stewart More: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Jewish_American_entertainers <u>LONG reading list is supposed to serve as additional resource material for students' research</u> a. Bruce, Lenny. "Jews" in <i>The Essential Lenny Bruce</i> , 35-49. b. Harris, Mark. "Twilight of the Tumblers: Last of the Schlemiels," <i>New York Magazine</i> , 32-9.

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		<p>c. Hoberman, J. and Jeffrey Shandler. <i>Entertaining America: Jews, Movies and Broadcasting</i>, “Entertaining ‘Entertaining America,” 11-13.</p> <p>d. Novak, William (Editor), and Waldoks, Moshe, <i>The Big Book of Jewish Humor</i>, <u>selections TBA</u></p> <p>e. Telushkin, Joseph. <i>Jewish Humor: What the Best Jewish Jokes Say About the Jews</i>, 15-39, 125-141.</p> <p>f. Freud, Sigmund (Joyce Crick, trans., John Carey, intro.). <i>The Joke and its Relation to the Unconscious</i>, 45-68</p> <p>g. Brook, Vincent. <i>Something Ain’t Kisher Here: The Rise of the “Jewish” Sitcom</i>, 1-65.</p> <p>h. Karpel, Ari (NY Times), “A Shtick With a Thousand Lives,” on Mel Brooks & Karl Reiner.</p>
14	12/6/10	<p>God Lost and Found: Back into Religion</p> <p>Jewish secularization received a substantial boost from the popular arts. What happens when contemporary “new-born” orthodox Jews not only appropriate popular music, but also begin using it as a means of enticing the secular and assimilated.</p> <p>a. Schechter, Basya. “The Music of the Sacred and the Profane,” in ZEEK (Fall 2007), 8–12.</p> <p>b. Anderman, Joan. “Jewish MC Rocks the Mike and Keeps it Kosher: Matisyahu has Orthodox Approach to Reggae” in Boston Globe.</p> <p>c. Serpick, Evan. “Matisyahu: Hasidic Hot Stepper: Madonna Wants to Party with the Jewish Reggae Star” in Rolling Stone</p> <p>d. Horn, Jordana. “Evolution of an Icon: Matisyahu’s Musical and Spiritual Journey” in Forward.</p> <p>e. Rogovoy, Seth. “Radical Music for the New Global Shtetl” in Forward.</p> <p>f. Piuyt – background material.</p> <hr/> <p>Final take-home exam given to students in class</p>
Final Exam	12/13/10	<p>Take-home exam essays to be mailed to instructor no later than 12 pm on Monday 12/13/10 to both email addresses (to be on the safe side): donnyi@sfjcf.org; dinbar@sbcglobal.net</p>