

Department: JUDS

Course number: 3401W

Course title: Jewish American Literature and Culture

Credits: 3

Contact Person: Stuart Miller

Content Area: CA 1 Arts and Humanities, CA 4 Diversity and Multiculturalism

Q/W: W

Catalog Copy: JUDS 3401W Jewish American Literature and Culture
Interdisciplinary study of literary and artistic productions by and about Jews in the United States.

Meets Goals of Gen Ed: Insofar as the course seeks to expand students' understanding of American identity and to introduce students to a range of texts, especially from the late 19th and early 20th centuries that they might not otherwise encounter, the course will help students to acquire intellectual breadth and versatility.

Inasmuch as the course will address the phenomenon of anti-semitism, not to mention fraught relations, shared and conflicting political interests of Jews and other ethnic groups in this country, it will certainly contribute to the acquisition of moral sensitivity.

Though the course covers an extended historical period beginning with the 1780s, a good portion of the course will address literature and culture from the 1950s to the present, thereby offering students a greater awareness of their era and society.

Finally, and perhaps most obviously, a course focused on a particular religious/ethnic group will by its very definition raise students' consciousness of the diversity of human culture and experience.

CA1 Criteria: Students will regularly be expected, in both class discussions and written work, to think and write critically about the historical experiences of Jews living in America, to recognize with a good deal of specificity the shifting nature of that experience in relation to world-historical and national events, and to come to grips with the range of different responses to those historical developments that can be found in Jewish American literature and culture.

Since this is a course on literature and culture, modes of symbolic representation, written texts, and performance art forms are its life blood. Students will be immersed in a range of cultural expressions from the very beginning and among the expected learning outcomes will be a greater understanding of generic diversity, conventions, and innovations.

CA4 Criteria: As a course that focuses on the specific and diverse experiences of a particular religious/ethnic group in the United States, by its very nature it will emphasize the varieties of human experiences, perceptions, thoughts, values, and modes of creativity. This variety will be expressed not only--or perhaps not even--by suggesting that there is something "distinctively Jewish" about a given poem or book, but also by problematizing the very homogeneity that is so

often presumed in a phrase like "distinctively Jewish." Given the extraordinarily diverse range of Jewish practices, identities, and cultures of origin (e. g., Sephardic and Ashkenzic, Hasidic and Atheist, Observant and Secular, etc.), it is quite impossible to consolidate this range into a single category of Jewishness. One of the course's primary goals will be to help students to see that Jewishness manifests itself in a range of diverse expressions, richly informed by other categories of identity, including gender, sexuality, class, history of immigration, and even race.

At the same time, the course will include some opportunities for comparative work, encouraging students to contrast modalities and forms of Jewish cultural expression with those of other ethnic groups in the US. In this context, similarities and differences will, no doubt, emerge.

W Criteria: Students will be expected to keep reading journals throughout the semester, which they will compose through the HuskyCT site so that the instructor can read and respond to them on a regular basis. These initial written encounters with the reading will then serve as the basis for several preliminary written exercises of a more formal nature, including a poetry explication and a scene or character analysis. Such writing assignments are invaluable for diagnostic purposes, but also because they produce a far more detailed and intimate engagement with the reading. The final paper will be either about a novel or film; students will be required to submit preliminary thesis statements, outlines, and annotated bibliographies. They will then be asked to work through several drafts, based on comments from the instructor, before submitting the final product.

Final grades for the course will include the following components: 10% for regular journal contributions; 15% for poetry explication; 15% for character or scene analysis; 35% for final paper. The remaining components of the grade will include 5% for class participation and 20% for the final exam.

Students will be informed on the syllabus, as well as in class, that they must pass the "W" component of the course in order to pass the course.