

# MODERN JEWISH LITERATURE

Fall 2014  
Tu/Th 2-3:15 pm  
Hellems 229

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Office hours: Tues 3:30-4:30 pm



Street graffiti in Tel Aviv (photo: Sunny Yudkoff)

In this course we study the work of Jewish writers from around the world. We look at a broad spectrum of texts that show the ways in which Jewish authors from different places speak about the world in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. We pay attention to questions of secularism and tradition; the experience of diasporic Jews, as exiles and as citizens; the move into modernity and questions of identity raised by the intellectual transitions brought about by political and social emancipation, as well as the enormous changes wrought by the ever-faster momentum of the modern world with its population redistribution, traumatic world-wide wars and rapid cultural transformations, and the creation and experience of living in a new homeland.

The course is taught in English; all readings are in English. The course is approved for the CU School of Arts and Sciences core curriculum in the category of literature and the arts.

## COURSE MATERIALS:

### 1. REQUIRED BOOKS

You need to bring a copy of each title with you to class when we discuss it.

- Art Spiegelman, *Maus I* and *Maus II* [or *The Complete Maus*, which contains both parts]

## 2. PHOTOCOPIES OF SHORT STORIES

All other readings (mainly, short stories) will be made available as PDFs in D2L.

You need to print out each assigned story and have it with you in class. I understand that there is an expense involved in printing out paper copies, but this expense is minimal compared to the cost of producing a course pack. You may print these at home if you own a printer, or in the library / elsewhere in town. There are relatively few pages assigned in any given week so the expense involved should be minimal.

Please hold on to the copies of all the stories until the end of the semester. At the end of the semester, if you do not wish to keep the paper copies, please be sure to recycle them.

## 3. A CLICKER

A Clicker, available from the CU Bookstore (it is the same clicker that you will use / have used for all other CU classes with clickers).

Important: new this year, you must register your clicker in order to use it.

1. Login to [mycuinfo.colorado.edu](http://mycuinfo.colorado.edu)
2. Click on the ↓Student tab.
3. Click on the ↓CUClicker Registration button.
4. You will be taken to the i>clicker registration page.
5. If not already filled out, enter your IdentiKey username where prompted for your student ID. Also enter your first and last name and your i>clicker's Remote ID where prompted. Finally, complete the Captcha image code.
6. After filling in all the information, click the ↓Register button.

## COURSE POLICIES

- **No laptops or tablets are permitted in class.** We meet for only 75 minutes twice a week so this is your time to take a break from email, social media, shopping for shoes—or whatever else you are inevitably going to start doing when there is a screen between you and the rest of the classroom. Some of you may be strong-willed to resist such wireless urges and might find this strict policy unnecessary. However, most of us (your professor included) have trouble tuning out the Internet's invasiveness. So, the policy applies to us all to ensure a distraction-free classroom in which we will be attentive to each other's ideas.

There are multiple studies available now on the negative effects of laptops and tablets in the classroom; for example, check out “A Case for Banning Laptops in the Classroom” from *The New Yorker*—this article is particularly compelling because it's written by a professor of—of all things—Computer Science: <http://www.newyorker.com/tech/elements/the-case-for-banning-laptops-in-the-classroom>.

Note: Any student who has a specific need for a computer during class (such as a documented learning disability that may require the use of specific software) should speak with the professor about their particular circumstances so that arrangements could be made.

- **Bring a regular paper notebook to class.** As is the case with the research on the negative effects of laptops in the classroom, there is now good research on how taking notes by hand on paper is

far more effective than turning yourself into a transcription machine writing down every word that the professor says without processing what's being said as much as you do when you take notes on paper. For example, take a look at this: <http://www.vox.com/2014/6/4/5776804/note-taking-by-hand-versus-laptop>

- **No cell phones / smart phones / texting / use of wireless messaging services of any kind in class.** Please silence and put away your phones and any other mobile devices during class—your phones need to be in the “silent” (not “vibrate”) mode and stored safely out of sight so that they will not disturb you (and others) if someone tries to reach you during class.

Please do not text during class. If you choose to do so (even surreptitiously under your desk), I'll politely ask you to leave class for the day, and you will be marked absent for the entire class.

Note: if, in exceptional circumstances (such as childcare arrangements or taking care of a sick relative), you expect an important phone call during class and need to have your phone available, please speak to the professor before the beginning of class so we can make arrangements for you to sit near the door in case you need to answer a call.

- **Bring copies of readings to class.** You need to always have paper copies of whichever reading we are discussing with you in class (whether books or short stories). With short stories (all of which are posted as PDFs in D2L), you need to print out each assigned story and have it with you in class. I understand that there is an expense involved in printing out paper copies, but this expense is minimal compared to the cost of producing a course pack. You may print these at home if you own a printer, or in the library / elsewhere in town.

If you do not have copies of the texts with you in class, you will be marked down in your participation grade.

There are relatively few pages assigned in any given week so the expense involved should be minimal. For example, it costs 10 cents per page to print at any of the CU libraries – so, even the longest PDF assigned this semester (Amos Oz's “The Hill of Evil Counsel”) will set you back only \$3 (the file is 60 pages long but these, like most PDFs for the course, have 2 book pages on an 8.5’x11’ sheet of paper – so it's only 30 actual pages that you'd be printing). Most other assigned stories are significantly shorter. And there may be better printing rates elsewhere in town / on the College Hill.

- **Office hours.** I hold regular office hours, noted at the top of this syllabus, in my office (also noted at the top of this syllabus). Please don't ask me where my office is: consult the map of the campus (it's very easy to find, I promise.) Office hours is the time for you to come ask me any questions you have about the course, or just to stop by to chat. Students are always encouraged to come speak to their professors, so please do so. I can also be available outside my office hours, by appointment; you need to write to me in advance to arrange the time if my regular office hours don't work for you.
- **Communication with the professor.** I communicate by email outside of class, so please feel free to contact me at [sasha.senderovich@colorado.edu](mailto:sasha.senderovich@colorado.edu) if you'd like to set up an appointment (if my regular office hours don't work) or for any other reason.

Please remember to use appropriate and professional language in your email. A rule of thumb for communication with faculty should be to begin your email with “Dear Professor [insert last

name]”—use the same type of address when you write to other professionals, potential employers, etc.

Do not expect that I reply to your email right away—be prepared to wait 24 hours for me to reply, so be sure to ask your questions in a timely manner if you anticipate needing a reply by a certain date.

## ASSESSMENT AND GRADING

**Your final grade (out of the max. total of 100 points) will be calculated the following way:**

- |  |           |
|--|-----------|
| 1. Class participation (active participation in class discussions; regular attendance) | 15 points |
| 2. In-class quizzes (every class, with one point per class)                            | 25 points |
| 3. Three timed take-home exams   | 60 points |

### **What does each of these components mean?**

- **CLASS PARTICIPATION.** Critical comprehension of all assigned readings and knowledgeable engagement in class discussions are essential. Because class discussions will revolve around the readings we study, you will be expected to come to class having completed all the readings for each class. You must prepare for each class in order to participate effectively.

The class will be divided into two groups. Only members of group #1 will participate for the first 50 or so minutes of each class; only members of group #2 will participate for the final 20 or so minutes of each class. The groups will switch off every class period. There are a couple of goals for this structure of this discussion-based course:

- a. In a class of about 30 students, it's very hard to meaningfully contribute if the discussion is a free-for-all discussion among all 30 students at once. By splitting the class into two smaller groups, no one group is too large for meaningful contributions to be possible. In a smaller group it's also harder to hide and rely on others to participate – everyone (hopefully) will speak up.
- b. In any given class period, the two groups will always participate in the discussion but will have different roles (and these roles will switch every class). The group that participated for the first 50 minutes of the class will aim to get at the bulk of whatever is assigned while the other group will be asked to come in towards the end of the class to comment on the discussion in the first part of the class and move the discussion of each text towards conclusion by offering larger reflections / wrapping up. Both types of skills are essential to learn, and each student will be able to hone both types of discussion skills.

You will get full credit by being a well-prepared, conscientious, regular, and helpful contributor to class discussions, who consistently raises points that help push the discussion forward and remains open and receptive to other students' contributions. This includes participating in clicker questions, raising your hand when the class is asked a question, and participating actively in group and partner activities.

**NOTE:** simply raising your hand frequently just to speak without meaningfully contributing to the class discussion is not going to get you full participation credit. Other students will probably quickly notice your behavior if you end up as someone who is hogging time for the sake of

hogging time. Active participation also means attentive listening and pushing the discussion forward.

Students with occasional but not regular participation will get partial credit. Students with no meaningful participation will get no credit. Students who are disrespectful to others in class discussions will have points deducted from this part of the grade

**ATTENDANCE**, of course, is part of the picture when it comes to class participation. You cannot be a meaningful participant if you are not regularly attending class. You may miss 2 classes without penalty and without any explanation that you need to provide for these absences (note, however, that you will not be able to make up the in-class quizzes for the classes you miss). For absences #3, 4, and 5 you will have 3 points deducted from your participation grade for each absence. When you miss your 6<sup>th</sup> class, I will deduct another 6 points from your participation grade (in effect, your entire participation grade will go down to 0 points at your 6<sup>th</sup> absence). If you miss more than 6 classes (three weeks' worth of class), you will fail the course no matter how well you do on any other assignment.

It is important to arrive in class on time. Usually, professors deduct attendance points for arriving to class late. I am not planning to do this; however, keep in mind that there will be quizzes in every class session and if you are late, you may end up missing a quiz that you won't be able to make up.

Note: besides negative implications on your participation grade, the damage from your absences to your final grade will be compounded by the fact that you will miss points on in-class quizzes on the days you miss.

Many of you commute, work alongside your studies, are involved in sports or other extracurricular activities, and/or have family responsibilities that demand your attention. You are expected to arrange your schedule such that you can attend class and complete all assignments. Except in situations spelled out by the university (which include religious holidays, some athletic commitments, and illness), absences beyond your 2 free absences will detract from your grade. Please be in contact with the professor as early as possible if regular attendance problems are arising due to extended illness or another reason. In that case, I will direct you to appropriate CU officials who can work as intermediaries between you and me to help you complete the course if possible and advise on whether withdrawing makes sense.

For absences that you believe can be excused under university policy:

- 1) Document this absence (letter from doctor or coach, etc.), and upload an image of the document, along with a description in the text section about what class dates it covers, to the D2L folder called "Documentation of absences." Do not give me pieces of paper in class (I may lose them). Only properly documented absences can be considered excused absences. If you have a flu or a headache for which you do not see a doctor, or if, say, your dog has a nasty bathroom incident while you are the only one of your roommates at home (this happened to one of my students once, apparently)—you have two classes you can miss for any reason, so save these de-facto excused absences for such occasions, should they arise.
- 2) Only after you have done this, email me to let me know you uploaded a document excusing your absence.
- 3) Please retain all paper documentation of your absences in case I need to check it later on.

For all absences:

- 1) Do not write to ask if you missed anything (because, of course, you did miss a class's worth of material if you weren't in class.) Contact a classmate to ask what you missed.
  - 2) If you wish to come to office hours to discuss, please contact me or just come! I'm always happy to talk.
  - 3) Regardless of reason for absence, you are responsible for all class material.
- **IN-CLASS QUIZZES.** These will take place during every class session. Each quiz will be worth 1 point (for the total of 25 points of the final grade).

The purpose of these quizzes is to ensure that you *attentively* read all of the assigned texts on time, don't fall behind, and are prepared to participate in class.

These quizzes will be very short, and they will be tabulated with the help of Clickers. You need to have Clickers with you in every class. Make sure your clickers have batteries that work, and always carry spare batteries with you.

Most quizzes will contain two multiple-choice questions. Depending on the difficulty, if there are two questions, they may be worth  $\frac{1}{2}$  point each or  $\frac{1}{4}$  and  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a point respectively if one question is meant to be more difficult than the other (so, partial credit, less than a full point per quiz, is possible). Some quizzes may be only one question or three or four questions.

If you arrive in class late or step outside during the class, you may end up missing a quiz. You cannot make up in-class quizzes you miss. In case of a documented excused absence, we may be able to make special arrangement for you to make up a missed quiz.

As a matter of policy, I will drop the lowest two grades on your quizzes (including for the quizzes you miss.) You can also have additional lowest quizzes dropped if you attend extra credit events, to be announced in class, each worth 1 point.

- **TAKE-HOME EXAMS.** There will be three of them during the course of the semester; each will be timed in D2L (i.e. you will have to complete the exam within a specific time, length TBA, once you begin.) Each exam will be graded out of 20 points.

Technically speaking, these are open-books, but the time limit on the exam will make it somewhat difficult to use books. You are, therefore, encouraged to take good notes on all the readings, which could help you enormously with these exams.

You will generally have a 3-4 day period in which to complete this timed exam, so you will be able to review the class material before you begin, on your own schedule.

We will be modeling various exam questions in class throughout the semester so by the time you take the exam, you will know exactly what kind of thinking the exam expects you to showcase. So, back to that participation and attendance policy: learning ways of thinking that we'll be polishing in class is not something you can make up, so do your best to avoid missing classes.

**Your final grade** will be calculated by adding together all the points you have gotten on your participation, quizzes, and take-home exams:

A (94-100); A- (90-93.9); B+ (86-89.9), B (83-85.9), B- (80-82.9); C+ (76-79.9); C (73-75.9); C- (70-72.9); D+ (66-69.9); D (63-65.9); D- (60-62.9), F, 59.9 or lower

I encourage you to speak with me about these requirements if they are not clear. Please communicate with me clearly if you are having any particular problems with the course or if a simple change could go a long way. Email is the best way of doing so. I am more than willing to work with you if you take the initiative to be in touch when appropriate. I am much less flexible when I hear about problems at the last minute or after the fact. I will hold regular office hours but I am also more than willing to meet with any of you at other times. Just let me know and we can set something up.

## **SCHEDULE OF CLASSES**

\*\*\* Please complete all assigned readings prior to class for which they are listed

### **A note on the process of reading:**

You will find it enormously helpful for your performance in class discussions, on in-class quizzes, and on take-home exams if you take good notes on what you read. I suggest that you take notes two ways: a) mark up the photocopies of short stories or pages of books and b) take actual notes on the texts you are reading in your notebook or on the computer (if you take notes on your computer, make sure you print out your notes and bring them to class because you can't use computers or other electronic devices in class itself.) You don't want your notes to be exhaustive and take up many pages—sparse and more precise notes are much easier to navigate when you need to use them than lengthy notes. When you are marking up a text, you might in particular pay attention to specific quotations that give you access to something important in the text; in your notes you may want to write down an attempt at close reading such quotations.

The reading assignments themselves are, on the whole, quite short. There are some weeks in which you'll be asked to read as little as 15-20 pages, though on average it will be about 50-60 pages per week. This isn't much at all for a college course. Instead of assigning you many more pages. I'd like you to read fewer pages—but read them well and carefully. This means both doing your best to understand the text and doing your best to look up what you don't understand. If you come across terms you don't know, I expect you do to your homework and know what you're reading (hint: just google what you don't know!)

## **JEWES AND WORDS**

Tues Aug 26	Introduction: What we talk about when we talk about “Jewish literature”
Thurs Aug 28	Sholem Aleichem, “On Account of a Hat” (9 pages)

## **TRADITION AND MODERNITY**

Tues Sept 2	Sholem Aleichem, “Today's Children” (17 pages) * Be sure to consult “Glossary and Notes” posted as a separate file
Thurs Sept 4	Sholem Aleichem, “Hodl” and “Chava” (29 pages) * Be sure to consult “Glossary and Notes” posted as a separate file

- Tues Sept 9 Isaac Bashevis Singer, "Gimpel the Fool" (13 pages)
- Thurs Sept 11 Nathan Englander, "The Wig" (22 pages)

### ASSIMILATION AND ITS DISCONTENTS

- Tues Sept 16 Isaac Babel, "The Story of My Dovecote" (12 pages)
- Thurs Sept 18 Franz Kafka, "The Report to an Academy" (9 pages)
- Tues Sept 23 Philip Roth, "Eli the Fanatic" (35 pages)
- Thurs Sept 25 No class (Rosh Hashana)

**\*\*\* Take home exam #1: this is a timed exam; it will be posted on Friday Sept 26 and will be due by Tuesday, September 30, 12 pm**

### WOMEN'S VOICES

- Tues Sept 30 Dvora Baron, "The Deserted Wife" (8 pages)
- Thurs Oct 2 Grace Paley, "Midrash on Happiness," "The Loudest Voice" (8 pages)
- Tues Oct 7 Savyon Liebrecht, "The Road to Cedar City" (33 pages)

### STRUGGLING WITH ZION

- Thurs Oct 9 Amos Oz, "The Hill of Evil Counsel" (parts 1-8; 30 pages)
- Tues Oct 14 Amos Oz, "The Hill of Evil Counsel" (parts 9-13; 26 pages)
- Thurs Oct 16 A.B. Yehoshua, "Facing the Forests" (33 pages)
- Tues Oct 21 Almog Behar, "I am One of the Jews" (8 pages)  
Sayed Kashua, "Cinderella" (2 pages)
- Thurs Oct 23 No class (professor away giving a paper)

### ONLY IN AMERICA

- Tues Oct 28 Saul Bellow, "Something to Remember Me By" (24 pages)
- Thurs Oct 30 Philip Roth, "Defender of the Faith" (20 pages)

**\*\*\* Take home exam #2: this is a timed exam; it will be posted on Friday, Oct 30 and will be due by Tuesday, November 4, 12 pm**



## MEMORY, HISTORY, TRAUMA

Tues Nov 4	Art Spiegelman, <i>Maus</i> (Part one, chapters 1-4) Henri Raczymow, “Memory Shot Through With Holes” (8 pages)
Thurs Nov 6	Art Spiegelman, <i>Maus</i> (Part one, chapters 5-6)
Tues Nov 11	Art Spiegelman, <i>Maus</i> (Part two, chapters 1-2)
Thurs Nov 13	Art Spiegelman, <i>Maus</i> (Part two, chapters 3-5)
Tues Nov 18	Etgar Keret, “Rabin’s Dead” (4 pages) and “Shoes” (4 pages)
Thurs Nov 20	No class (professor away at a conference)
Tues Nov 25	No class, fall break
Thurs Nov 27	No class, fall break

## BELIEF AT THE TURN OF THE MILLENIUM

Tues Dec 2	Allegra Goodman, “Onionskin”
Thurs Dec 4	No class – professor away at a conference
Tues Dec 9	David Bezmozgis, “Minyan”
Thurs Dec 11	Nathan Englander, “The Gilgul of Park Avenue”

**\*\*\* Take home exam #3: this is a timed exam; due by the date and time determined by the Registrar as the Final Exam for this course**

## CU BOULDER UNIVERSITY-WIDE POLICIES

### DISABILITY POLICY

If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit to your professor a letter from Disability Services in a timely manner (for exam accommodations provide your letter at least one week prior to the exam) so that your needs can be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations

based on documented disabilities. Contact Disability Services at 303-492-8671 or by e-mail at [dsinfo@colorado.edu](mailto:dsinfo@colorado.edu).

If you have a temporary medical condition or injury, see Temporary Injuries under Quick Links at Disability Services website (<http://disabilityservices.colorado.edu/>) and discuss your needs with your professor.

### **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND THE HONOR CODE**

All students of the University of Colorado at Boulder are responsible for knowing and adhering to the academic integrity policy of this institution. Violations of this policy may include: cheating, plagiarism, aid of academic dishonesty, fabrication, lying, bribery, and threatening behavior. All incidents of academic misconduct shall be reported to the Honor Code Council ([honor@colorado.edu](mailto:honor@colorado.edu); 303-735-2273). Students who are found to be in violation of the academic integrity policy will be subject to both academic sanctions from the faculty member and non-academic sanctions (including but not limited to university probation, suspension, or expulsion). Other information on the Honor Code can be found at

<http://www.colorado.edu/policies/honor.html> and at <http://honorcode.colorado.edu>

### **APPROPRIATE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT**

Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Those who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, color, culture, religion, creed, politics, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity and gender expression, age, disability, and nationalities.

Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records.

See policies at: [www.colorado.edu/policies/classbehavior.html](http://www.colorado.edu/policies/classbehavior.html) and also [www.colorado.edu/studentaffairs/judicialaffairs/code.html#student\\_code](http://www.colorado.edu/studentaffairs/judicialaffairs/code.html#student_code)

### **DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT**

The University of Colorado Boulder (CU-Boulder) is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working, and living environment. The University of Colorado does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual orientation, or veteran status in admission and access to, and treatment and employment in, its educational programs and activities. (Regent Law, Article 10, amended 11/8/2001). CU-Boulder will not tolerate acts of discrimination or harassment based upon Protected Classes or related retaliation against or by any employee or student. For purposes of this CU-Boulder policy, "Protected Classes" refers to race, color, national origin, sex, pregnancy, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or veteran status. Individuals who believe they have been discriminated against should contact the Office of Discrimination and Harassment (ODH) at 303-492-2127 or the Office of Student Conduct (OSC) at 303-492-5550. Information about the ODH, the above referenced policies, and the campus resources available to assist individuals regarding discrimination or harassment can be obtained at

### **RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE**

Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to reasonably and fairly deal with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. If you have a potential class conflict because of religious observance, you must inform me of that conflict within three weeks of the start of classes. See policy details at [http://www.colorado.edu/policies/fac\\_relig.html](http://www.colorado.edu/policies/fac_relig.html).  
<http://hr.colorado.edu/dh/>