

THE JEWISH THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
LIST COLLEGE

Fall 2015

Roskies

LIT 3529x **JEWISH LIFE WRITING AND THE STRUGGLE FOR SELFHOOD**

Fellows Seminar

M 4:10-6:50

Course Description: This course tracks the historical development of Jewish life writing from Renaissance self-fashioning to the self-conscious mixing of fiction and fact in our own day. At the same time, it explores that which remains constant throughout the generations: the built-in tension between present and past, the authority and the alien, the individual and the community, the narrating and the narrated I.

Course Content: To get a handle on Jewish life writing spanning four centuries, we have chosen twelve works whose authors wrote in Hebrew, Yiddish, German, Polish and English. These works have been ordered in contrasting pairs: the perspective of men as compared with that of women, rebels compared with traditionalists, children thrown into the historical maelstrom of Holocaust on the one hand and national rebirth, on the other.

Expectations & Assessment: The student's first responsibility is to prepare for class by doing the assigned readings. The teacher's responsibility is to contextualize these readings. The final grade will be based on two writing assignments, as follows:

One short paper (5-8 pages) due November 23. Worth 25% of the final grade.

Final take home exam. A take home exam will be provided at the final class. The student will be asked to answer two questions (of five or more) that will essentially require two medium length essay answers (about 6 pages each). 75% of final grade.

Course Readings: It is recommended that students purchase the following books, all but one available for sale at Amazon.com

- Leone Modena - *The Autobiography of a Seventeenth-Century Venetian Rabbi: Leon Modena's Life of Judah*, ed. Mark R. Cohen (Princeton UP, 1988).
- *The Life of Glückel of Hameln 1646-1724 Written by Herself*, ed. And translated by Beth-Zion Abrahams (London: East & West, 1962)
- Solomon Maimon, *An Autobiography* (1792-93), trans. J. Clark Murray (1888). Univ. of Illinois, 2001.
- Rememberings: The World of a Russian-Jewish Woman in the Nineteenth Century by Pauline Wengeroff (Author), Bernard Dov Cooperman
- Mary Antin, *The Promised Land* (1912). Penguin 1977.
- Ephraim E. Lisitzky, *In the Grip of Cross-Currents* (1949) Translated from the Hebrew by Moshe Kohn and Jacob Sloan and rev. by the author. New York : Bloch Pub. Co. [1959]
- Alfred Kazin, *A Walker in the City* (1951). Harcourt Brace.
- Michał Głowiński, *The Black Seasons*; translated from the Polish by Marci Shore. Evanston: University of Nebraska Press, 2005.
- Amos Oz - *A Tale of Love and Darkness* (2003).

All other required texts will be distributed in class. Additional required readings are available on Blackboard (=BB).

Disability Policy: The JTS policy on disabilities may be found at www.jtsa.edu/About_JTS/Administration/Policies/Students_with_Disabilities.xml

Academic Integrity Statement: Students in this class are expected to maintain academic integrity; academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. JTS Student Disciplinary Procedures can be found at http://www.jtsa.edu/About_JTS/Administration/Policies/Student_Disciplinary_Procedures.xml

Office Hours: Unterberg 506, Mondays 1:00-3:00. The best way to get in touch with me is via e-mail: daroskies@jtsa.edu.

21 Sept. **Nature, Nurture and the Discovery of the Self**

From: S. Y. Abramovitsh - Sholem Yankev Abramovitsh, / שלמה רב חיימס / בימים ההם / *Of Bygone Days* (1899, 1910) - trans. Raymond P. Scheindlin in *A Shtetl and Other Yiddish Novellas*, xerox

From: Hayyim Nahman Bialik, ספ"ח / Random Harvest (1908) –David Patterson & Ezra Spicehandler, eds. *Random Harvest: The Novellas of Bialik* (Westview, 1999), bilingual xerox.

12 Oct. **A Renaissance Rabbi**

Leone Modena, ספר ח"י יהודה / *The Autobiography of a Seventeenth-Century Venetian Rabbi: Leon Modena's Life of Judah*, ed. Mark R. Cohen (Princeton UP, 1988; Ingram rpt.). BM755.M54 A313 1988
http://www.amazon.com/Autobiography-Seventeenth-Century-Venetian-Rabbi/dp/0691008248/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1438685031&sr=1-1&keywords=The+Autobiography+of+a+Seventeenth-Century+Venetian+Rabbi%3A+Leon+Modena%E2%80%99s+Life+of+Judah

19 Oct. **A Woman for All Seasons**

The Life of Glückel of Hameln 1646-1724 Written by Herself, ed. and translated by Beth-Zion Abrahams (London: East & West, 1962). DS 135 G5 H313 1962. <http://www.amazon.com/Gluckel-Hameln-1646-1724-Written-Herself/dp/B0010K35R4>.

26 Oct.

The First Confessional Jew

Solomon Maimon, *Lebensgeschichte / An Autobiography* (1792-93), trans. J. Clark Murray (1888). Univ. of Illinois, 2001. B3068 A32 2001
http://www.amazon.com/Solomon-Maimon-Autobiography/dp/0252069773/ref=sr_1_fkmr0_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1438684268&sr=1-1-fkmr0&keywords=Solomon+Maimon%2C+Lebensgeschichte+%2F+An+Autobiography+%281792-93%29%2C+trans.+J.+Clark+Murray

Liliane Weissberg, "Salomon Maimon writes his Lebensgeschichte," in *Yale Companion to Jewish Writing and Thought in German Culture, 1096-1996*, ed. Sander L. Gilman & Jack Pipes (1997). (BB)

2 Nov.

Autobiography as Requiem

Pauline Wengeroff, *Memoiren eine Grossmutter / Rememberings: The World of a Russian-Jewish Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (1913-19). Translated from the German by Henny Wenkart; edited by Bernard Dov Cooperman (Univ. Press of Maryland, 2000).
http://www.amazon.com/Rememberings-Russian-Jewish-Nineteenth-Century-Studies/dp/1883053617/ref=sr_1_fkmr0_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1438684733&sr=1-1-fkmr0&keywords=Paulina+Wengeroff

9 Nov.

An All-American Girl

Mary Antin - *The Promised Land* (1912). Penguin 1977.
http://www.amazon.com/Promised-Land-Penguin-Classics-ebook/dp/B00CHQOVQO/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1438685210&sr=1-1&keywords=Mary+Antin+-+The+Promised+Land%2C+Penguin+Books

Werner Sollors, "Introduction" to *The Promised Land*.

16 Nov.

Fathers and Sons Adrift in America

Ephraim E. Lisitzky, אלה תולדות אדם / *In the Grip of Cross-Currents* (1949). Translated from the Hebrew by Moshe Kohn and Jacob Sloan and rev. by the author. New York: Bloch Pub. Co. [1959] PJ5053.L5 E43
<http://www.blochpub.com/art/in-the-grip-of-the-cross-currents-ephraim-e-lisitzky.html>

23 Nov.

Midterm Writing Assignment.

Two Lithuanian-born children arrive on the shores of America and settle in Boston. Both are very precocious. One is a girl, the other is a boy. She becomes a poster girl for acculturation, while he remains within the

confines of Hebrew culture. Compare and contrast them using the analytic tools that you have learned.

23 Nov. **Identity in Crisis**

[Rosia Speiser] *My Autobiography*, 1939 – bilingual Yiddish-English Xerox.

Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Marcus Moseley, and Michael Stanislawski, Introduction to *Awakening Live: Autobiographies of Jewish Youth in Poland before the Holocaust*, edited by Jeffrey Shandler. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002. DS135.P63 A123 2002. (BB)

30 Nov. **The Return of the Native**

Alfred Kazin - *A Walker in the City* (1951). Harcourt Brace. PN75.K3 A3 1958.

http://www.amazon.com/Walker-City-Harvest-Book-ebook/dp/B0077FATOI/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1438685277&sr=1-1&keywords=Alfred+Kazin+-+A+Walker+in+the+City

Alfred Kazin – “The Past Breaks Out,” in *Inventing the Truth: The Art and Craft of Memoir*, ed. with an introduction by William Zinsser. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1987, pp. 70-100. Xerox.

7 Dec. **Selfhood and the Holocaust**

Michał Głowiński, *Czarne sezony / The Black Seasons* (1999). Foreword by Jan T. Gross; translated from the Polish by Marci Shore. Evanston: University of Nebraska Press, 2005.

http://www.amazon.com/Black-Seasons-Michal-Glowinski/dp/0810119595/ref=sr_1_fkmr0_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1438685447&sr=1-1-fkmr0&keywords=Michal+Glowinski%2C+The+Dark+Seasons

14 Dec. **Selfhood and Statehood**

Amos Oz - סיפור על אהבה וחושך / *A Tale of Love and Darkness* (2003). PJ5054.O9 S5613 2004.

http://www.amazon.com/Tale-Love-Darkness-Amos-Oz-ebook/dp/015603252X/ref=sr_1_1_twi_2_pap?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1438685352&sr=1-1&keywords=Oz%2C+A+Tale+of+Love+and+Darkness

Additional References

- גליקל: זכרונות, 1691-1719. ההדירה ותרגמה מיידיש, חוה טורניאנסקי. ירושלים: מרכז שזר, 2006.
DS135.G5 H316 2006
- ספר חיי יהודה לר' יהודה אריה ממודינא; ההדיר על-פי כתב-יד דניאל קארפי
BM755.M54 A3 1985
- Ido Bassok, ed. עלילות נעורים: אוטוביוגרפיות של בני נוער יהודים מפולין בין שתי מלחמות העולם / מבחר, מבוא והקדמות עידו בסוק; עריכה אברהם נוברשטרן
DS134.7 .A55 2011
- Georges Gusdorf, "Conditions and Limits of Autobiography" (1956) in *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical*, ed. James Olney (Princeton UP, 1980), pp. 28-48. (BB)
- Michael P. Kramer, "Mary Antin and the Jewish Origins of the American Self," *Prooftexts* 18 (1998): 121-48. (BB)
- Marcus Moseley. *Being for myself alone: origins of Jewish autobiography*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2006. CT25 .M67 2006
- Michael Stanislawski, *Autobiographical Jews: essays in Jewish self-fashioning*. Seattle & London: University of Washington Press, 2004. PN842 .S73 2004
- J. Starobinski, "The Style of Autobiography," in *Autobiography*, ed. Olney, pp. 73-84. (BB)
- Pauline Wengeroff, *Memoirs of a Grandmother: Scenes from the Cultural History of the Jews of Russia in the Nineteenth Century, Volumes One and Two*. Translated by Shulamit Magnus (Stanford University Press, 2010). DS135.B383 W46413 2010.
- K. J. Weintraub, "Autobiography and Historical Consciousness," *Critical Inquiry* 1 (June 1975) (BB).