

**The Hebrew University of Jerusalem,
Rothberg International School,
Division of Undergraduate Studies
Spring Semester 2016**

48622: The Search for Meaning in Contemporary Jewish Writing

Instructor: Professor Elliott Malamet

Time: Tuesday and Thursday , 14:30-16:00

Email: emalamet@rogers.com

Office Hours: By appointment

Course Description: This course will explore a variety of modern Jewish texts which are organized around the search for identity and meaningfulness in contemporary life. We will examine how such writing anticipated and responded to various trends that have shaped the twentieth and twenty-first century Jewish experience: dislocation from the Old World to the New; trauma and genocide; the struggle for a coherent Jewish self in the face of both exile and homecoming; assimilation and relationships with the other; secularism and the redefinitions of Judaism; coming to terms with loss and the desire for belonging; material success and spiritual longing. The course engages global Jewish writing (North America; Europe; Israel) in a wide span of genres: fiction (novels and short stories); poetry; essays; autobiography and memoir; theology; philosophical and psychological arguments. These genres are brought into dialogue with one another in order to draw connections between different forms of writing and discover how Jews have wrestled and creatively interacted with all facets of modernity. The seminar is heavily discussion based and students will be encouraged to join the contemporary Jewish conversation.

Assessment

Course Preparation and Participation - 15% This mark entails regular attendance as well as prior reading of the relevant readings for each week; and contribution to the class discussion.

First Essay - 35%. Due in Week 5.

Final Essay - 50% Due the week before the end of the semester

Course Syllabus

February 18: Introduction. From The Old World to the New

Isaac Bashevis Singer. "Selected Stories". Y813 S617

February 23/5: The Disappearance of Meaning

Franz Kafka, The Trial 833 K11

March 1/3: Genocide and Survival

Primo Levi - If This is a Man (American title: Survival in Auschwitz).

Paul Celan - "Selected Poems." Y831 C392 or 933.478.1 C392

March 8/10 : The Search for Home

Meir Shalev - A Pigeon and a Boy H3 S528

March 15/17: Post Theological Humanism

Yehuda Amichai - "Selected Poems" H13 A516

March 22: : Memory and History

Dara Horn - A Guide for the Perplexed JOS on order

1st essay due

March 24: Purim (No Class)

March 27-31: Midterm Exam Week

April 5/7 - Identity and Counter Identity

Philip Roth - The Counterlife Y813 R845

April 12/14 Exile and Exodus

Shulem Deen, All Who Go Do Not Return

April 15-30 - Pesach Break

May 3/5: Growing Up

Amos Oz - A Tale of Love and Darkness **H3 O99**

May 10: The New Anti-Semitism

Cynthia Ozick, "The Modern Hep Hep." <http://observer.com/2004/05/the-modern-hep-hep/>

(Final Essay Due)

May 12: Yom Ha'Atzmaut (No class)

May 17/19 Experimenting with the Short Story Form in New Israeli Writing

Etgar Keret - Selected Stories **H3 K41**

Shani Boianjiu - "Means of Suppressing Demonstrations", "New Yorker", 6/25/2012, Vol. 88 Issue 18, p. 58-64. **E-JOURNAL**