

## Jews and Popular Culture



### Instructor

Prof. Rachel Gordan

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Anderson Hall 107f (My office is within the main Religion office, next to the faculty mailboxes ☺)

Office hours: Thursdays 2:15—3:30 in my Anderson Hall office and by appointment (I will be available for evening zoom office hours on most weekday nights, as well as the occasional Sunday evening zoom office hours).

### Course Details:

Time: Tues, periods 8 & 9 (3:00-4:50) & Thurs, period 9 (4:00-4:50)

Location: Andover 013

(Note that a minimum grade of 'C' is required for General Education credit) Class resources, announcements, updates, and assignments will be made available through the class Canvas site ([www.elearning.ufl.edu](http://www.elearning.ufl.edu)). This course is not being recorded, so if you miss class, please speak to the professor and/or classmates to find out about what you missed.

To accommodate students who are sick and need to quarantine, this class will include remote access, when needed, and at the professor's discretion, so that students who cannot be with us in the classroom can still participate. Because we are a small class, please let Professor Gordan know (rgordan@ufl.edu), if and when you plan to access our class remotely. The logistics of this will be discussed during the first week of classes, but do not hesitate to email Professor Gordan if you have questions.

MASKS ARE EXPECTED DURING CLASS AND FOR IN-PERSON OFFICE HOURS, IN COMPLIANCE WITH UNIVERSITY GUIDELINESS

Course description: What is Jewish popular culture and what does it tell us about Jews, American history, and popular culture? In this class, we'll be learning about 20<sup>th</sup> century American Jewish history through the lens of popular culture, and we'll be learning about popular culture while thinking about history, religion, culture, and ethnicity. Our focus will be on changes that occurred at midcentury, but students are invited to think about more contemporary examples of Jewish popular culture in their individual projects. A special feature of this course is that we will also be learning from some special guest speakers, from all over the world, about different aspects of Jews and popular culture.

Course objectives:

- To think critically about popular culture.
- To understand American Jewish history through the lens of popular culture.
- To write about how American culture has changed over time.
- To understand how American understandings of Jews and other minorities changed over the course of the latter half of the twentieth century
- Understanding the changing relationship between Jews and the majority culture in 20<sup>th</sup> century America
- Use literary and popular culture sources to make a historical argument
- Think about Jews in relation to broader trends in American history and culture

#### Assignments

Two papers	30%
Museum assignment write-up	15%
Museum assignment oral presentation	5%
Pop Quizzes	20%
Participation	15%
Attendance	15%

\*\*Because we are a discussion-based class, and your presence and contributions matter very much throughout the entire semester, students with perfect attendance will receive 1.5 extra credit points added to their final grade.

<b>A</b>	<b>94 – 100% of possible points</b>		<b>C</b>	<b>74 – 76%</b>
<b>A-</b>	<b>90 – 93%</b>		<b>C-</b>	<b>70 – 73%</b>
<b>B+</b>	<b>87 – 89%</b>		<b>D+</b>	<b>67 – 69%</b>
<b>B</b>	<b>84 – 86%</b>		<b>D</b>	<b>64 – 66%</b>
<b>B-</b>	<b>80 – 83%</b>		<b>D-</b>	<b>60 – 63%</b>
<b>C+</b>	<b>77 – 79%</b>		<b>E</b>	<b>&lt;60</b>

## Part I: First half of the Twentieth Century

- 1) Tues August 24 Introduction  
What makes it Jewish popular culture?  
Jews and popular culture and models of cultural pluralism/diversity, Emma Lazarus, Israel Zangwill, and Horace Kallen  
Discuss: Museum assignment <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=txBhsxUR-RQ>  
**Cultural Pluralism, visions of America, and early 20<sup>th</sup> century Jewish popular culture**  
For Thurs, read: Takacs, chapter 1 on CR. Note: if you are accessing this from off-campus, you'll want to login, through VPN. Info on how to do that, can be found at: <https://uflib.ufl.edu/using-the-libraries/off-campus-access/>
- 2) Thurs August 26 Takacs and Jewish popular culture  
For Tues, read Takacs, chapter 3 (this reading is denser than most of our readings, so give yourself time between Thurs and Tues to read—and perhaps, to read a second time ☺)
- 3) Tues August 31 Popular Culture and Emma Lazarus, Horace Kallen, and Israel Zangwill on cultural pluralism  
For Thurs please read: Takacs, chapter 8 until break in page on p. 182
- 4) Thurs September 2 Israel Zangwill melting pot
- 5) Tues: Sept 7<sup>th</sup> Rosh Hashanah no class
- 6) Thurs September 9 Special guest: Professor **Bryan Cheyette (University of Reading, UK)** will speak about the Melting Pot and Israel Zangwill at **4 pm. Please register in advance:** <https://jst.ufl.edu/israel-zangwill-ghetto-zion-melting-pot/>  
Reading for Tues: <http://www.expo98.msu.edu/people/kallen.htm>  
Begin about three-quarters of the way down, with, “And, finally, the Jews.”  
*Also: start working on your thesis for paper #1: we'll be workshoping these in-class on Sept 21*
- 7) Tues: September 14 Horace Kallen and Jazz Singer  
For Tues, Sept 21, please read: <https://www.city-journal.org/html/americanization-irving-berlin-12247.html> (This is a long-ish—although interesting—read, so give yourself some time ☺)
- 8) Thurs: September 16<sup>th</sup> Yom Kippur no class
- 9) Tues Sept 21 Irving Berlin: “He is American music.” And **thesis workshop**  
For Thursday, please read **chapter 15** in the James Kaplan biography of Irving Berlin, on CR
- 10) Thurs Sept 23 Irving Berlin God Bless America  
For Tues, please read the excerpt from the novel, *Wasteland*, on CR

## Part II: 1940s antisemitism and *anti*-antisemitism in American Popular culture

- 11) Tues Sept 28 Frank Sinatra and *the House I Live In* & *Wasteland*, by Jo Sinclair

Reading for Thurs: [https://www.nytimes.com/1981/07/11/obituaries/meyer-levin-writer-75-dies-books-included-compulsion.html?mc=aud\\_dev&ad-keywords=auddevgate&gclid=Cj0KCQjwvO2IBhCzARIsALw3ASq31rM-Qiw7oO4N9rqUIIj9Ru65p7D\\_K6DGPBLJbz7iS7Uoy0Lz1ooaAgWeEALw\\_wcB&gclsrc=aw.ds](https://www.nytimes.com/1981/07/11/obituaries/meyer-levin-writer-75-dies-books-included-compulsion.html?mc=aud_dev&ad-keywords=auddevgate&gclid=Cj0KCQjwvO2IBhCzARIsALw3ASq31rM-Qiw7oO4N9rqUIIj9Ru65p7D_K6DGPBLJbz7iS7Uoy0Lz1ooaAgWeEALw_wcB&gclsrc=aw.ds)

and:

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/leopold-and-loebs-criminal-minds-996498/>

- 12) Thurs Sept 30 *Wasteland* and Leopold and Loeb: the ugly feelings of Jewishness  
For Thursday, Oct 7<sup>th</sup>, read *Gentleman's Agreement*, chapter 1 and 2 on CR  
**\*\*\*Paper one due Sunday, October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 9 pm**
- 13) Tues Oct 5 Special guest: Professor **Sarah Imhoff** (Religion & Jewish Studies, Indiana University) will speak on The Trial of the Century: Leopold and Loeb
- 14) Thurs Oct 7 *Gentleman's Agreement*
- 15) Tues Oct 12 **antisemitism and islamophobia special event with Prof. Mehnaz Afridi (Director, Holocaust, Genocide & Interfaith Education Center, Manhattan College) & Prof. Ivan Kalmar (Department of Anthropology, University of Toronto)**
- 16) Thurs Oct 14 *Gentleman's Agreement*
- 17) Tues Oct 19 *Gentleman's Agreement*  
For Thurs, read: <https://www.tabletmag.com/sections/community/articles/gertrude-berg-best-actress-emmy>
- 18) Thurs Oct 21 Unknown today, but a star in her time: Meet Gertrude Berg/Molly Goldberg!  
For Tues, read: Opening of *Marjorie Morningstar*, on CR

### **Part III The Long Jewish 1950s (which means, really the early 1960s too)**

- 19) Tues Oct 26 Molly Goldberg, Marjorie Morningstar, and Cold War Jews
- 20) Thurs Oct 29 Marjorie and Morningstar Mrs. Maisel Morningstar
- 21) Tues Nov 2 Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, Sylvia Plath American Jewish Year book  
For Thurs, read: *Stan Lee*, chapter 1 and 2 for Thursday
- 22) Thurs Nov 4 Stan Lee, *Spider Man*  
For Tues, read: chapters 3-6  
**\*\*Essay #2 due Sunday, Nov 7, 9 pm**
- 23) Tues Nov 9 special guest: **Liel Liebovitz**  
For Thurs, read *Jew-hooing the 1960s* on CR, Introduction
- 24) Thurs Nov 11 Jew-hooing the 1960s and Stan Lee  
For Tues, read: *Jew-hooing the 1960s* chap 3
- 25) Tues Nov 16 Jew-hooing the 1960s chapter three: Lenny Bruce
- 26) Thurs Nov 18 Barbra Streisand  
**\*\* Professor Shaul Magid extra credit event**
- 27) **Tues Nov 23 Paper thesis workshop**
- 28) Thurs Nov 25: Thanksgiving
- 29) Tues Nov 30 Presentations
- 30) Thurs Dec 2 Presentations
- 31) Tues Dec 7 Presentations  
**\*\*\*This syllabus is subject to change --- Professor Gordan will alert students to changes**

### **COURSE POLICIES AND STUDENT RESOURCES**

### Attendance Policy

Students are expected to attend class regularly and to arrive on time. Absences will be excused in situations beyond the student's control (illness, family emergency, etc.). Please let me know as soon as possible if you must miss class. Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work are consistent with university policies specified at: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>.

### Academic Honesty

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge, which states, "We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: "On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment." The Honor Code (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor.

Plagiarism on any assignment will automatically result in a grade of "E" for the course. Plagiarism is defined in the University of Florida's Student Honor Code as follows: "A student shall not represent as the student's own work all or any portion of the work of another. Plagiarism includes (but is not limited to): (a) quoting oral or written materials, whether published or unpublished, without proper attribution, and (b) submitting a document or assignment which in whole or in part is identical or substantially identical to a document or assignment not authored by the student." Students found guilty of academic misconduct will be prosecuted in accordance with the procedures specified in the UF honesty policy.

### Making Up Work

Work is due as specified in the syllabus. Late work is subject to a 1/3 grade penalty for each 24 hour period it is late (e.g., a paper that would've earned an A if turned in in class on Monday becomes an A- if received Tuesday, a B+ if received Wednesday, etc, with the weekend counting as two days). To be excused from submitting work at the assigned time, you must give 24 hours advance notice and/or meet the UF standards for an excused absence.

### Students Requiring Accommodations

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the disability Resource Center. (352-392-8565, [www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/](http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/)). It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester.

### Course Evaluation

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing UF's standard online evaluations (summary results will be available to students here) as well as a course-specific evaluation that focuses on course content and the experience of the Quest curriculum. Class time will be allocated for the completion of both evaluations.

### Class Demeanor

Students are expected to arrive to class on time, stay the full class period, and behave in a manner that is respectful to the instructor and to fellow students.

Counseling and Wellness Center

Contact information for the Counseling and Wellness Center:

<http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx>, 392-1575; and the University Police Department: 392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies.

Writing Studio

The writing studio is committed to helping University of Florida students meet their academic and professional goals by becoming better writers. Visit the writing studio online at <http://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/> or in 302 Tigert Hall for one-on-one consultations and workshops.

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