

JEWISH FILMS AND LITERATURE

University of Pennsylvania

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GRMN 261/JWST 261/ENGL 287

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DESCRIPTION:

From the 1922 silent film *Hungry Hearts* through the first "talkie," *The Jazz singer*, produced in 1927, and beyond *Schindler's List*, Jewish characters have confronted the problems of their Jewishness on the silver screen for a general American audience. Alongside this Hollywood tradition of Jewish film, Yiddish film blossomed from independent producers between 1911 and 1939, and interpreted literary masterpieces, from Shakespeare's *King Lear* to Sholem Aleichem's "*Tevye the Dairyman*," primarily for an immigrant, urban, Jewish audience.

In this course, we will study a number of films and their literary sources (in fiction and drama), focusing on English-language and Yiddish films within the framework of three problems of interpretation: a) the different ways we "read" literature and film; b) the various ways that the media of fiction, drama, and film "translate" Jewish culture; and c) how these translations of Jewish culture affect and are affected by their implied audience.

TEXTS:

At the Penn Book Center (130 S. 34th Corner of 34 and Samson)

Sholem Aleichem, *Tevye the Dairyman and the Railroad Stories*, trans. and ed. Hillel Halkin (Schocken, 1987, 0-8052-0905-0)

Joseph Stein, *Fiddler on the Roof*; Based on Sholem Aleichem's *Stories* (Limelight Eds, 1990, 0-87910-136-9)

Abraham Cahan, *Yekl and The Imported Bridegroom* (New York: Dover, 1970)

Saul Bellow, *The Victim*

Anzia Yezierska, *Red Ribbon on a White Horse* (New York: Persea, 1978)

Philip Roth, *Goodbye Columbus* (Vintage, 1987) (1959)

Isaac Bashevis Singer, *Enemies, A Love Story* (Fawcett, 1978)

Grace Paley, *Enormous Changes at the Last Minute*

Bulkpack, available at Campus Copy, Walnut and 39th.

FILMS:

Will be screened according to the schedule, below. Also will be on reserve briefly at MMETS (basement DRL, 33rd and Walnut):

Tevye (96 minutes) (USA, 1939), dir. Maurice Schwartz.
Fiddler on the Roof (3 hours) (USA, 1971), dir. Norman Jewison; screenplay Joseph Stein, based on the play by Joseph Stein and the Tevye stories by Sholem Aleichem.
Hester Street (Abraham Cahan, Yekel) (1975, 90 min., US, Joan Micklin Silver)
Uncle Moses (USA, 1932), dir. Maurice Schwartz
Hungry Hearts (Anzia Yezierska) (1925)
The Jazz Singer (1927, 89 min., US, Alan Crosland) (Al Jolson)
Gentlemen's Agreement (1947, 118 min., US, Elia Kazan)
The Pawnbroker (US 1965, 116 minutes bw/ Sidney Lumet)
Enemies: A Love Story (film) (1989, 119 min., US, Paul Mazursky)
Schindler's List (1993, 185 min., US Steven Spielberg)
Goodbye, Columbus (1969, 105 min., US, Larry Peerce)
Annie Hall (Woody Allen) (1977, 94 min., US, Woody Allen)
Enormous Changes at the Last Minute (1983, 115 min., US, Mirra Bank and Ellen Howde)

REQUIREMENTS:

Attendance and participation in class.
Attendance at film screenings (or view films at MMETS)
Participation in the class listserver discussion group (posing questions and offering summaries, as we determine together)
2 short essays (4-5 pages)
Final paper (10-12 pages) SCHEDULE:

Week 1

Sept. 10 Introduction and Background Delmore Schwartz, "In Dreams Begin Responsibilities"

PART I: THE CULTURAL AGENDA OF TRANSLATION: FROM THE SHTETL TO HOLLYWOOD

Week 2 How to Read a Yiddish Classic (in English)

Sept 15 READING: Sholem Aleichem, "Tevye the Dairyman," in Halkin, pp. 3-131. (Focus on "Tevye Strikes it Rich," "Hodl," "Chava," "Lekh-Lekho")

Sept. 17 Sholem Aleichem, continued Week 3: From Page to Screen, From Europe to America

Week 3

Sept. 22 ROSH HASHANAH -- NO CLASS (MAKE-UP CLASS TO BE SCHEDULED)

Sept. 23 Screening of Tevye, Williams 24, 7-8:30 PM

Sept. 24 READING: In Bulkpack: Seth L. Wolitz, "The Americanization of Tevye or Boarding the Jewish Mayflower," *American Quarterly* (December, 1988) 40, 4, 514-36. FILM: Tevye (96 minutes) (USA, 1939), dir. Maurice Schwartz.

Week 4 Tevye on Broadway AND A Yiddish Film Goes Hollywood

Sept. 28 Screening of Fiddler on the Roof, Williams 24, 7-10 PM

Sept. 29 FILM: Fiddler on the Roof (3 hours) (USA, 1971), dir. Norman Jewison; screenplay Joseph Stein, based on the play by Joseph Stein and the Tevye stories by Sholem Aleichem.

Oct. 1 READING: Joseph Stein, Fiddler on the Roof. FIRST SHORT ESSAY DUE (4-5 PP.) CHANGE DUE DATE TO OCT. 8

PART II: THE ORDEAL OF AMERICANIZATION

Week 5 Old World, New Romance

Oct. 6 SUKKOT -- NO CLASS (MAKE-UP CLASS TO BE SCHEDULED ?)

Oct. 8 The Literary Version, 1896 READING: Abraham Cahan, Yekl (pp. 1-89) Screening of Hester Street, Williams 23, 7-8:30 PM

Week 6 The Film Version, 1975

Oct. 13 SIMHAT TORAH -- IN-CLASS SCREENING

Oct. 15 Discussion FILM: Hester Street (1975, 90 min., US, Joan Micklin Silver)

Week 7 The Sweatshop and a Streng Love -- The Literary Version, 1918, AND The Film Version, 1932

Oct. 20 READING: In Bulkpack: Sholem Asch, Uncle Moses (1918), from Three Novels, trans. Elsa Krauch (G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1938, pp. 3-176).

Oct. 21 Screening: Uncle Moses, Williams 24, 7-8:30 PM

Oct. 22 FILM: Uncle Moses (1932, 87 min., US, dir. Maurice Schwartz)

Week 8 A Woman Goes to Hollywood

Oct. 27 READING: Anzia Yeziarska, "Hester Street," "My Last Hollywood Script" (both in Anzia Yeziarska, Red Ribbon on a White Horse (New York: Persea, 1978); and "This is What \$10,000 Did to Me" (from How I Found America, pp. 263-269) (BULKPACK)

Oct. 28 Screening: Hungry Hearts, Williams 24, 7-8:30 PM

Oct. 29 FILM: Hungry Hearts (USA, 1922) (silent), producer Samuel Goldwyn Company, dir. E. Mason Hopper, screenplay Julien Josephson, based on book Hungry Hearts by Anzia Yeziarska. (80 minutes)

Week 9 The First Talkie

Nov. 3 READING: (in the Bulkpack) "Day of Atonement," Samson Raphaelson (short story), from The Jazz Singer, Robert L. Carringer, ed. University of Wisconsin Press, 1979 (Wisconsin-Warner Screenplay Series, pp. 147-167). Selection from the theater play, Samson Raphaelson, The Jazz Singer (NY: Bretano's, 1925, pp. 119-153). (Act III) Selection from the screenplay, Alfred A. Cohn, adaptation and continuity, from the screenplay by Samson Raphaelson, The Jazz Singer, in Robert L. Carringer, ed. University of Wisconsin Press, 1979 (Wisconsin-Warner Screenplay Series, pp. 124-133).

Nov. 4 Screening of The Jazz Singer, Williams 24, 7-8:30 PM

Nov. 5 FILM: The Jazz Singer (1927, 89 min., US, Alan Crosland) (Al Jolson)

PART III: ANTI-SEMITISM IN THE U.S.

Week 10

Nov. 10 READING: Saul Bellow, The Victim

Nov. 11 Screening of Gentlemen's Agreement, Williams 24, 7-9:30

Nov. 12 FILM: Gentlemen's Agreement (1947, 118 min., US, Elia Kazan)

PART IV: THE HOLOCAUST IN AMERICA

Week 11

Nov. 16 Screening of The Pawnbroker Williams -- 7-9 PM

Nov. 17 The Pawnbroker (US 1965) 116 minutes bw/ Sidney Lumet

Nov. 18 Screening of Schindler's List (1993, 185 min., US, Steven Spielberg) -- Williams 24, 7-10 PM

Nov. 19 Isaac Bashevis Singer, Enemies: A Love Story (novel) Schindler's List (1993, 185 min., US Steven Spielberg)

[STILL JUGGLING THE TIMES FOR THIS SECTION...]

REVISED SCHEDULE:

11/17: DISCUSS "PAWNBROKER"

11/18: EVENING SCREENING OF SCHINDLER'S LIST

11/19: CLASS SCREENING OF ENEMIES: A LOVE STORY

11/24: CLASS DISCUSSION OF NOVEL, ENEMIES, FILM ENEMIES, AND FILM SCHINDLER.

2ND ESSAY DUE 12/1/98

Week 12

Nov. 23 Screening of Enemies: A Love Story, Williams 24, 7-9:30

Nov. 24 Enemies: A Love Story (film) (1989, 119 min., US, Paul Mazursky)
SECOND SHORT ESSAY DUE (4-5 PP.) [REVISED DUE DATE: 12/1/98]

Nov. 26 THANKSGIVING -- NO CLASS

PART V: ACCULTURATION, ASSIMILATION: THE OTHER SIDE OF GOING HOME

Week 13

Dec. 1 READING: Philip Roth, Goodbye, Columbus (novella) Dec. 2 Screening of Goodbye, Columbus, Williams 24, 7-9 PM

Dec. 3 FILM: Goodbye, Columbus (1969, 105 min., US, Larry Peerce)

Week 14

Dec. 7 Screening of Annie Hall, Williams 24, 7-9 PM

Dec. 8 Annie Hall (Woody Allen) (1977, 94 min., US, Woody Allen)

Dec. 9 Screening of Enormous Changes at the Last Minute, Williams Hall 24, 7-9 PM

Dec. 10 FILM: Enormous Changes at the Last Minute (1983, 115 min., US, Mirra Bank and Ellen Howde) SHORT STORIES: Grace Paley, Enormous Changes at the Last Minute.

DEC. 17 FINAL PAPER DUE (10-12 PP.)