

JEWISH MASCULINITIES: FROM SHYLOCK TO THE ZOHAN

ENG 356.001: READINGS IN JEWISH LITERATURE

Fall Semester 2017 | Tuesdays and Thursdays | 12:40 – 2:00 pm | Snyder Hall C-301

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ABOUT THIS COURSE:

This course is designed to strengthen and build upon the skills you already have, which are associated with MSU's [undergraduate learning goals](#), through the study of the representation of Jewish men from Shakespeare through 21st century popular culture. A section of our D2L site is dedicated to explaining the connection between our course materials/assignments and the ULGs. I hope this syllabus will get you excited about digging into this topic which straddles issues concerning gender, religion and race in modern Europe, America and the Middle East.

Class Meetings are Tuesdays and Thursdays from 12:40-2:00pm in Snyder Hall C-301

Our course materials can be found and/or explained on our D2L site which is located here: <https://d2l.msu.edu/d2l/home/481842>

Three Jews are sentenced to death. They are put in front of a firing squad. The officer turns to the first condemned man: "Do you want a blindfold?" "Yes, sir!" He asks the second one the same question, "Yes, sir!" He asks the third, "No, I don't want anything from you." The second man turns to the third, saying to him in a worried voice, "Moshe, don't make trouble now."

ABOUT DR. MARGOT B. VALLES:

I am an assistant professor in the department of English. I also teach IAH and Jewish Studies classes. Feel free to AMA during my office hours and over email. My job is to facilitate your success and learning throughout this class. If you have suggestions about how I can do my job better, please let me know.

Office Hours are Tuesdays and Thursdays from 2:30-4:00pm in Wells Hall C-623 or by appointment

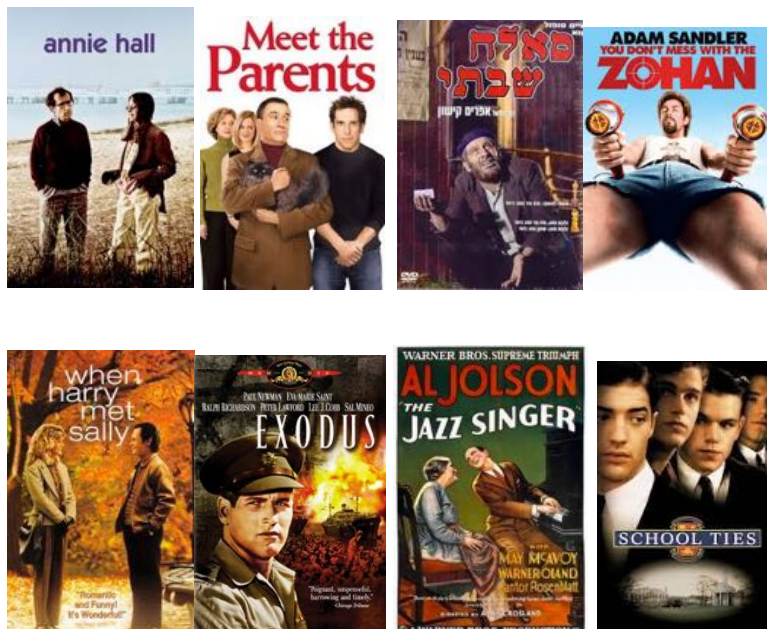


Image 1 IDF soldier, Asael Lubotzky prays with tefillin. Source: Wikipedia



ABOUT THE TEXTS:

For the first half of the semester, I am assigning works which are generally available for free online. When we come across texts that are not, but which are older than copyright, I plan to make them available to you via pdf. There are, however, a few books that I recommend you buy (any format is okay—but no matter what format you choose, bring it to class! It is DEFINITELY helpful to have it with you during discussions. We'll also be watching/discussing movies. Some movies I will ask you to watch on your own time. I recommend Amazon Prime/Streaming for accessing most of the films we'll be discussing. Here is a tentative list of the books we'll be reading. An asterisk marks the ones that you should try to obtain a copy of.



Shakespeare *The Merchant of Venice*

Eliot *Daniel Deronda*

Zangwill *Children of the Ghetto*

Orzeszkowa *Meir Ezofowicz*

Mendele *Binyomin III*

Sholem Aleichem *Tevye the Dairy Man**

Kafka *The Trial*

Uris *Exodus**

Roth *The Breast**

Foer *Everything is Illuminated**

ABOUT THE ASSIGNMENTS:

The assignments are designed to give me a sense for what you are learning in our class. The tasks you are asked to complete range from reflective to critical, in support of [analytical thinking](#), [integrated reasoning](#), [effective communication](#) and [cultural understanding](#). I would be happy to discuss the relationship between each of our course activities, graded assignments, materials and these goals. Furthermore, a section of our D2L site is dedicated to explaining the ways that each assignment supports each of these objectives.

In this section of the syllabus, you can find a breakdown of the graded assignments in this course and my means for assessing those assignments.

Weekly Discussion Questions:

Every week you are asked to post 2 OPEN-ENDED discussion questions to our D2L site, which will then form the basis for our discussions during Thursday meetings. They will be due by 9am every Thursday morning, and, unless otherwise directed, can deal with anything connected with our course material up to that point. Each set of questions is awarded 2 points. 1 point is awarded upon completion. The second point is awarded according to how thoughtful/compelling the question is and whether it has the potential to create good discussion.

We will discuss what makes a strong discussion question toward the beginning of the semester so there should be no-one who is unable to receive 2 points every week.

A Jewish boy comes home from school and tells his mother he's been given a part in the school play. "Wonderful. What part is it?" The boy says, "I play the part of the Jewish husband." The mother scowls and says, "Go back and tell the teacher you want a speaking part."

ABOUT THE ASSIGNMENTS, CONT'D

Weekly Reflections:

Every week before our Tuesday meetings, you are asked to post a 1-3 paragraph (roughly 1 page) reflection on the material we have been reading that week or up until that point in the semester. This is also an opportunity to reflect on ways that your opinions/ideas have been evolving and to ask any questions you would like to pursue in class activities and assignments. These reflections will be posted in our D2L site (you must post your own before you can read your classmates') so do not put anything you would not wish your classmates to read.

These assignments are also worth 2 points a week. To receive full credit, your reflections should be in paragraph form (not bullet points or outline form), narrative—that is they tell some kind of story, and deal explicitly with our course material (I'd love to hear how you are doing in general, but that is not what these reflections are for). As long as I can understand your writing and follow your ideas, I will not be looking at your grammar/spelling, etc.

Essay 1: The Older Stuff

About midway through the semester, you will be asked to submit an essay exploring an issue or theme that arose during the first half of our class materials. Together we will

design a rubric for evaluating these essays as well as determining the length and expectations for its format. This essay is worth 15 points and is therefore high stakes—hence your input on how I should assess them is essential to your success in this class.

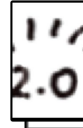
Essay 2: The Less Old Stuff

Something similar will occur at the end of the semester with a 25-point essay. Again, you will design the parameters of the assignment and its evaluation as a class.

ABOUT ASSESSMENT:

Assessment will occur in a variety of manners in this course. I will be providing you with feedback on many of your assignments in written form and verbally in class. I will suggest ways to improve your performance as well as ideas for thinking about our course materials and ideas in new ways. You will also be assigned points for the completion of course assignments in a timely and thoughtful way.

Course grades will depend on the number of points you earn throughout the semester. The points align with course grades as noted in the table to the right.

 4.0	90-100pts	 2.0	70-74pts
 3.5	85-89pts	 1.5	65-69pts
 3.0	80-84pts	 1.0	60-64pts
 2.5	75-79pts	 0	0-59pts

"If the statistics are right, the Jews constitute but one quarter of one percent of the human race. It suggests a nebulous puff of star dust lost in the blaze of the Milky Way. Properly, the Jew ought hardly to be heard of, but he is heard of, has always been heard of. He is as prominent on the planet as any other people, and his importance is extravagantly out of proportion to the smallness of his bulk."

Mark Twain, 1897

ABOUT THE POLICIES:

Academic Honesty:

I expect you to maintain complete academic integrity and I will do my best to facilitate your success in adhering to that standard.

In basic terms, you are expected to complete all course assignments without assistance from any unapproved source, without acknowledgement of that source. You are allowed to use academic resources in support of research for your assignments as long as you acknowledge your sources and provide full **citations** for materials you consult. I do not have a preferred citation style, but I recommend that you follow MLA, APA or Chicago for guidance. You are expected to develop original work for this course; therefore, you may not submit course work you completed for another course to satisfy the requirements for this course. Also, you are not authorized to use the www.allmsu.com Web site to complete any course work in this course. Students who violate MSU regulations on Protection of Scholarship and Grades will receive a failing grade in the course or on the assignment.

I am required to report all instances in which a penalty grade is given for academic dishonesty. Students reported for academic dishonesty are required to take an online course about the integrity of scholarship and grades. A hold will be placed on the student's account until such time as the student completes the course. This course is overseen by the Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education.

Consistent with MSU's efforts to enhance student learning, foster honesty, and maintain integrity in our academic processes, I have chosen to use **Turnitin**---a service available through the dropbox on D2L, which compares your papers with multiple sources. The tool will compare each paper you submit to an extensive database of prior publications and papers, providing links to possible matches and a 'similarity score.' The tool does not determine whether plagiarism has occurred or not. Instead, I will make a complete assessment and judge the originality of your work. All submissions to this course may be checked using this tool.

Attendance and Missing Classes Policy:

You are expected to come to class, for the full length of class, unless there is a situation which requires your presence elsewhere and you have informed me in advance of your absence. A series of missed classes or a pattern of missing class, showing up late to class, or leaving class early may result in a lowered or even a failing grade in the course. If you are concerned about your absences, please get in touch with me and we can discuss your particular situation. Work for a given day should be completed regardless of attendance in class. Make-up assignments may be necessary in certain circumstances.

Communication Policy:

I invite frequent and varied communication with students. You are welcome to communicate with me in person after/before class and during office hours. You may also email me at any time or chat with me on D2L if we are there at the same time. I do my best to respond to email questions in a prompt and professional way. While I do not expect instant replies from you, I do expect you to check your MSU email and the D2L Course page because those are the most secure and universal means for me to communicate with you.

In terms of **feedback and grading**, I will do my best to return your graded assignments to you with reasonable speed. During certain times of the semester, I may grade more quickly than at others. Be aware, grading times may vary.

When communicating with your peers, whether online or face-to-face, I expect students to maintain a high level of courtesy and respect. Especially because this course may deal with ideas and beliefs that are different from your own and which may raise expected or unexpected strong feelings, it is essential that every student monitor his/her/their own language and tone and the classroom dynamic. I want you to feel welcome to share opinions and beliefs that may be unpopular and I hope you will make your classmates feel welcome to share their view points, even when you disagree with them.

Disability Accommodations Requests:

Michigan State University is committed to providing equal opportunity for participation in all programs, services and activities. Requests for accommodations by persons with disabilities may be made by contacting the Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities at 517-884-RCPD or on the web at rcpd.msu.edu. Once your eligibility for an accommodation has been determined, you will be issued a verified individual services accommodation (“VISA”) form. Please present this form to me at the start of the term and/or two weeks prior to the accommodation date (test, project, etc). Requests received after this date will be honored whenever possible.

SIRS Policy:

Michigan State University takes seriously the opinion of students in the evaluation of the effectiveness of instruction, and has implemented the SIRS (Student Instructional Rating System) process to gather student feedback. This course utilizes the “online SIRS” system, and you will receive an e-mail sometime during the last two weeks of class asking you to fill out the SIRS at your convenience. As a reminder to be sure to fill out the SIRS evaluation form, the final grade for this course will not be accessible on STUINFO during the week following the submission of grades for this course unless the SIRS online form has been filled out. You have the option on the online SIRS form to decline to participate in the evaluation of the course – we hope, however, that you will be willing to give us your frank and constructive feedback so that we may instruct students even better in the future.

ABOUT THE COURSE SCHEDULE:

You are invited to follow our course assignments via the Calendar function on D2L or by using this syllabus. I reserve the right to change the readings and assignments for any day on this syllabus and will do my best to inform you of any changes in a timely and respectful way.

Weeks	Meetings	Texts under Discussion	What to do and what is due
Week 1	Th Aug 31	Syllabus	Explore D2L site
Week 2	Tu Sept 5	<i>Merchant of Venice</i> , Acts 1 and 2	Week 2 Reflections (due 11:59pm this Tuesday and again at this time every week)
	Th Sept 7	<i>Merchant of Venice</i> , Acts 3, 4, and 5	Week 2 DQs (due 9am this Thursday and again at this time every week)
Week 3	Tu Sept 12	<i>Daniel Deronda</i> , Chapters 32-34, 40-43, 46, 47	Week 3 Reflections
	Th Sept 14	<i>Daniel Deronda</i> , Chapters 16-18, 50, 51	Week 3 DQs
Week 4	Tu Sept 19	<i>Children of the Ghetto</i> , TBA	Week 4 Reflections
	Th Sept 21	<i>Children of the Ghetto</i> , TBA (DR. V will not be in class due to Rosh HaShanah)	Week 4 DQs
Week 5	Tu Sept 26	<i>Meir Ezofowicz</i> , TBA	Week 5 Reflections
	Th Sept 28	<i>Meir Ezofowicz</i> , TBA	Week 5 DQs
Week 6	Tu Oct 3	<i>Benjamin III</i> (Binyomin III)	Week 6 Reflections
	Th Oct 5	<i>Benjamin III</i> (Binyomin III)	Week 6 DQs
Week 7	Tu Oct 10	<i>Tevye the Dairyman</i> , through “Today’s Children”	Week 7 Reflections (think about Essay 1)
	Th Oct 12	<i>Tevye the Dairyman</i> , “Hodl” and “Chava”	Week 7 DQs
Week 8	Tu Oct 17	Kafka	Week 8 Reflections (Think about Essay 1)

Semester Mid-point (Oct 18)	Th Oct 19	Kafka	Week 8 DQs
Week 9	Tu Oct 24	Exodus; Movie TBA	Essay 1: The Older Stuff Due Monday Oct. 23 at 11:59pm Week 9 Reflections
	Th Oct 26	Exodus	Week 9 DQs
Week 10	Tu Oct 31	Exodus, Movie, TBA	Week 10 Reflections
	Th Nov 2	Exodus	Week 10 DQs
Week 11	Tu Nov 7	Exodus, Movie, TBA	Week 11 Reflections
	Th Nov 9	Exodus	Week 11 DQs
Week 12	Tu Nov 14	Exodus Movie, TBA	Week 12 Reflections
	Th Nov 16	The Breast	Week 12 DQs
Week 13	Tu Nov 21	The Breast Pre Thanksgiving Review	Week 13 Reflections
	Th Nov 23	Thanksgiving NO CLASS	Week 13 DQs replacement due Sunday, Nov. 26 at 9pm
Week 14	Tu Nov 28	Everything is Illuminated, TV, TBA	Week 14 Reflections
	Th Nov 30	Everything is Illuminated	Week 14 DQs
Week 15	Tu Dec 5	Everything is Illuminated, TV, TBA	Week 15 Reflections
	Th Dec 7	Everything is Illuminated	Week 15 DQs
Week 16	Th Dec 14	Final Exam Period	Essay 2: The Less Old Stuff Due Thursday at 2:45pm

"Among the distinguishing mental and moral traits of the Jews may be mentioned: distaste for hard or violent physical labor; a strong family sense and philoprogenitiveness; a marked religious instinct; the courage of the prophet and martyr rather than of the pioneer and soldier; remarkable power to survive in adverse environments, combined with great ability to retain racial solidarity; capacity for exploitation, both individual and social; shrewdness and astuteness in speculation and money matters generally; an Oriental love of display and a full appreciation of the power and pleasure of social position; a very high average of intellectual ability."

-- The New International Encyclopedia.
