Jewish Studies 23200: Jews in Film and Fiction. Spring 2013

The City College, CUNY

Dr. Amy W. Kratka
Mondays and Wednesdays 11:00a-12:15p. NAC 4-115
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Films to be shown in class:
* Gentleman’s Agreement (1947 Dir. Elia Kazan)
* The Pawnbroker (1964 Dir. Sidney Lumet)
* Annie Hall (1977 Dir. Woody Allen)
* A Life Apart: Hasidism in America (1997 Dir. Oren Rudavsky and Menachem Daum)
* The Jazz Singer (1927 Dir. Alan Crosland)
* Trembling Before G-d (2001 Dir. Sandi Simcha Dubowski)
* A Serious Man (2009Dirs. Ethan Coen and Joel Coen)

Required Texts:

Course Objective: In this class we will examine the portrayal of Jewish characters in (mostly) post-WWII fiction and film. We will discuss the way directors and writers treat stereotypes and stock characters; we will investigate the nuanced depiction of complex characters and ask what role religion plays in these depictions. We will look at the representation of women compared to men, the portrayal of parents and their expectations, talk about the significance of children, examine the importance of bearing witness to tragedy, investigate the way in which stories change when subjected to different media, and discuss, in general, the larger questions that are posed by being Jewish in America.

Course Learning Outcomes: Students will learn to
1. Analyze primary sources in detail.
2. Evaluate secondary sources that revisit or interpret primary texts.
3. Formulate new, creative approaches to tradition based on independent research.
4. Present orally on these creative approaches to the history and the tradition as they relate to primary texts.

5. Connect classroom lectures with research that makes tangible elements of contemporary Jewish life.

Requirements:

Every student must write 1 response paper, 2 pages long. You should base your response on a piece of text from our syllabus, a short story, a book chapter, or a novel—not on a film—that is baffling or interesting and requires further thought or explanation. The response should NOT be a summary. You may quote directly from your source.

Every student will write 2 long papers for this class, 6-8 pages each. Details and guidelines will follow.

I will not accept e-mailed or late papers.

Plagiarism is a serious offense. Taking someone else’s work and passing it off as your own constitutes plagiarism. Students who plagiarize will automatically fail the class.

Absences should be limited to 4, total, for the semester. Any more and you risk failing the class.

Percentage Breakdown:
Response Paper 20%
Paper 1: 30%
Paper 2: 35%
Attendance and Participation: 15%

Class Schedule: (This may change according to the needs of the class)

Accommodation and Assimilation in Postwar America:
M 1/28: Introduction: Film: Gentleman’s Agreement
W 1/30: Film: Gentleman’s Agreement
M 2/4: Roth’s Goodbye, Columbus
W 2/6: Roth’s Goodbye, Columbus
M 2/11: Roth’s “Conversion of the Jews” and “Eli, the Fanatic” (in Goodbye, Columbus)
W 2/13: Ozick’s “Bloodshed” (in Bloodshed and Three Novellas)
M 2/18: No Class: President’s Day

The Persistence of Memory:
W 2/20: (Monday Schedule) Film: The Pawnbroker
M 2/25: Film: The Pawnbroker
W 2/27: Ozick’s “The Shawl” (in The Shawl) **Response Paper Due**
M 3/4: Ozick's *Rosa* (in “The Shawl”)

**Insiders and Outsiders Looking In:**

W 3/6: **Long Paper 1 Due.** Film: *Annie Hall*
M 3/11: Film: *Annie Hall*
W 3/13: Film: *A Life Apart: Hasidism in America*
M 3/18: Film: *A Life Apart: Hasidism in America*
W 3/20: Neal Gabler’s *An Empire of their Own* (selected chapters) and **Round Table Discussion**

**Spring Recess 3/25-4/2**
W 4/3: Film: *Trembling Before G-d*
M 4/8: Film: *Trembling Before G-d*

**Fathers and Sons:**

W 4/10: Film: *The Jazz Singer*
M 4/15: Film: *The Jazz Singer*
W 4/17: Halberstam's *A Seat at the Table*
M 4/22: Halberstam's *A Seat at the Table*

**Family and Faith:**

W 4/24: Allegra Goodman’s *The Family Markowitz*
M 4/29: Allegra Goodman’s *The Family Markowitz*
W 5/1: Selected Essays on Jewish Writing and the Multicultural Dilemma (**handout**) and **Round Table Discussion**
M 5/6: Film: *A Serious Man*
W 5/8: Film: *A Serious Man*
M 5/13: **Long Paper 2 due** and Film TBA
W 5/15: Class Cancelled (*Shavuot*)