

JST 3930

LIT 4930

Jewish-American Cinema, FALL 2025

Instructor: Professor Dragan Kujundzic

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Tuesday, 8-9 (3:00 PM – 4:55 PM)

Thursday, 9 (4:05 PM – 4:55 PM)

TURLINGTON 2322



The course will introduce students to the rich history of Jewish cinema and the latest critical and theoretical literature about it. It will be organized thematically, and chronologically, starting with the topics of Jewish Diaspora, emigration to the US and integration, the first sound film, and then films about the Holocaust, comedy, Israeli Cinema. During the course, we will screen and discuss films involved with the representation of the Jews (not necessarily made by Jewish American cineastes like Charlie Chaplin's *The Great Dictator* and *Inglorious Basterds* by Quentin Tarantino) and those of course made by prominent Jewish American filmmakers. The course will cover the screening and discussion of classics such as *Fiddler on the Roof*, or Barbara Streisand's *Yentl* (together with reading the novel by Sholem Aleichem and the story by Isaac Bashevis Singer on which each film was respectively based); the extensive analysis of the first sound movie, *The Jazz Singer* with Al Jolson, including critical and theoretical responses by Irvin Howe and Susan Gubar; *Schindler's List* by Steven Spielberg and *The Pianist* by Roman Polanski. Jewish humor in cinema will be discussed (Billy Wilder, *Some Like It Hot*; and Mel Brooks—*The Producers*, *Blazing Saddles*). Special attention will be dedicated to women filmmakers, such as Barbara Streisand, Susan Seidelman, and Amie Heckerling. The course will conclude with the Coen Brothers' film *Serious Men*, Woody Allen's *New York Story*, Nathan Silver's, *Between the Temples*. This list is not exhaustive, and may change during the course to include, for example, Israeli or Jewish World cinema or filmmakers' biographies.

Learning goals: the students will learn to think critically about the seminal films of Jewish-American Cinema, and essays about them. All academic literature will be provided by the instructor.

Students will be expected to write short summaries of each film screened, which will count towards their class attendance and homework (10%) and group presentation participation (40% of the grade). There will be a mid-term (20%) and a final paper (20%), and individual presentations and reports (10%).

Collective class presentations will be assigned. Attendance is obligatory. Honors Code and the UF Health Policies will be observed. The details are accessible here:

[UF Syllabus Policy Links - Online Course Syllabi - University of Florida](#)

Academic Policies & Resources Academic Policies: Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in the course are consistent with university policies. See UF Academic Regulations and Policies for more information regarding the University Attendance Policies. Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic ...
syllabus.ufl.edu

The syllabus is not final and may be changed during the semester according to the needs of the class and the benefit of the students. Any changes will be sent duly ahead of time in writing via the class listserv and or canvas.

Please consult your UF email regularly as well as Canvas for announcements about the class and class assignments. Course material will be distributed via the listserv and or canvas.

The class will also on occasion and exceptionally meet via ZOOM, when the instructor is at an academic conference, indicated in the syllabus, and to be announced on Canvas and via the listserv. Please plan to attend all meetings, including the ZOOM. Two class absences during the semester are allowed without excuse. Any other additional absences will require written excuse such as a doctor's note.

Major Jewish Religious Holidays are observed, as indicated in the syllabus.

Syllabus, Jewish-American Cinema

Tuesday marked as 2 period

Tuesday, 8-9 (3:00 PM – 4:55 PM)

Thursday marked as 1 period

Thursday, 9 (4:05 PM – 4:55 PM)

Week one, August 21

1 **Thursday** Introduction, Tiffany Shlain, *The Tribe*. In class screening. *Tevye the Milkman (Library of Yiddish Classics Edition)* by Sholem Aleichem, text provided by instructor. *Fiddler on the Roof*, Screen, Amazon. *Yiddl mitn fidl (The Jew With His/Her Fiddle)*, screen selection in class

Week two, August 26-August 28

2 Continue *Tevye Stories* and *Fiddler on the Roof*

1 Continue Introduction, *Tevye the Milkman (Library of Yiddish Classics Edition)* by Sholem Aleichem, texts, provided by instructor. *Fiddler on the Roof*, Screen, Amazon.

Week three, September 2-September 4

2 **First Group Presents, Presentation One**, *Tevye the Milkman*. *Fiddler on the Roof*. *Laughing in Darkness*, Library UF, also YouTube. *The Jazz Singer*; discussion essays provided by instructor; introduction, screen clips, YouTube.

1 *The Jazz Singer*; discussion essays provided by instructor; introduction, screen clips, YouTube.

Week four, September 9-September 11

2 *Tevye the Milkman*. *Fiddler on the Roof*. *Laughing in Darkness*, Library UF, also YouTube, continue. *Jazz Singer*, introduction.

1 ***The Jazz Singer* and essays, continue introduction and discussion.**

Introduction: Charlie Chaplin, *The Great Dictator*, Stream YouTube,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EN-uDhd2HRo&t=4367s>

Also, Amazon Prime. Documentary by Costa Gavras,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sq2SdsfZ7cY>. Instructor's introduction

Week five, September 16-September 18

2 **Second Group Presents, Presentation Two**, *The Jazz Singer* and essays.

1 Chaplin, *The Great Dictator*, and documentary by Costa Gavras,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sq2SdsfZ7cY> and articles, screen/read at home

Week six, September 23-September 25

2 Rosh Hashanah, High Holiday, No Class

1 **Third Group Presents, Presentation Three, The Great Dictator**, Gavras, and articles.

Week seven, September 30-October 2

2 **Screen**, Billy Wilder, *Some Like It Hot*, Amazon; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Death_Mills; *Billy Wilder Speaks*, Amazon.
Instructor's lecture.

1 **Yom Kippur, High Holiday, No Class**

Week eight, October 7-October 9

2 **Fourth Group Presents, Presentation Four**, Billy Wilder, *Some Like It Hot*, Amazon; *Billy Wilder Speaks*, Amazon. **Introduction, Begin Screening**, Steven Spielberg, *The Fablemans*

1 *The Fablemans*, finish

Week nine, October 14-October 16

2 Tarantino, *Inglorious Basterds*, **screen in class** (selected scenes) **and discuss**, and or **screen the entire film at home**

1 Tarantino, finish

Midterm Due October 17

Week ten, October 21-October 23

2 **First Group Presents, Presentation Five, The Fablemans, Second Group Presents, Presentation Six, Inglorious Basterds**

1 **Screen**, Taika Waititi, *Jo-Jo Rabbit*

Week eleven, October 29-October 31

2 **Screen**, finish, Taika Waititi, *Jo-Jo Rabbit*. **Third Group Presents, Presentation Seven**, Taika Waititi, *Jo-Jo Rabbit*.

1 **Introduction, Read** Isaac Basevis Singer, *Yentl*, selected scenes Streisand, *Yentl*
Watch *Isaac in America*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YPDowgxxqjA>

Week twelve, November 4-November 6

2 Continue, *Yentl*, and *Fourth Group Presents, Presentation Eight, Yentl* (story and film), and *Isaac in America*.

1 Screen in class, selection, *Kissing Jessica Stein*

Week thirteen, November 11 to November 13

2 Veterans Day, National Holiday, No Class

1 Screen, conclusion, *Kissing Jessica Stein*, discussion. Selected scenes, screen and discuss, bar mitzva and bat mitzva scenes from The Coens, *A Serious Man*, Sandler, *You Are So Not Invited to My Bat Mitzva*. Screen in class, Nathan Silver, *Between the Temples*

Week fourteen, November 18 to November 20

2 Screen in class, finish, Nathan Silver, *Between the Temples* with discussion

1 Class Meets on Zoom, instructor at an academic conference. Woody Allen, *The New York Stories*, Screen on Zoom in class, optional at home, TBA

Week fifteen, November 25-November 27

Thanksgiving Holiday, No Classes

Week sixteen, December 2

2 Class will meet on Zoom (instructor at an academic conference), Student individual final project presentation/group presentations. All group presentation and discussion, The Coens, *A Serious Man*, (Group 1) Sandler, *You Are So Not Invited to My Bat Mitzva* (Group 2), Woody Allen, *The New York Stories* (Group 3), Nathan Silver, *Between the Temples*, *Kissing Jessica Stein* (Group 4), exact discussion format TBA in class. Instructor's Course Summary. **Final Paper Due December 6 via email/canvas**

Selected Literature (selected chapters and review articles to be distributed in class)

Bartov, Omer. *The "Jew" in Cinema: From The Golem to Don't Touch My Holocaust*. (2004)

Bial, Henry. *Acting Jewish. Negotiating Ethnicity on the American Stage and Screen*. (2005)

Buhle, Pauul. *From the Lower East Side to Hollywood: Jews in American Popular Culture*. (2004)

Desser, David. *American Jewish Filmmakers*. Second Edition (2003)

Doneson, Judith, E. *The Holocaust in American Film. (Judaic Traditions in Literature, Music and Art)*. (2002)

Gabler, Neil. *An Empire on Their Own. How the Jews Invented Hollywood*. (1989)

Mintz, Allan, L.. *Popular Culture and the Shaping of Holocaust Memory in America (Samuel and Althea Stroum Lectures in Jewish Studies)* (2001)

Samberg, Joel. *Reel Jewish*, (2000)