

JST 4936

LIT 4930

Jewish-American Cinema, FALL 2022

Instructor: Professor Dragan Kujundzic

dragan@ufl.edu

Tuesday, 7 (1:55 PM – 2:45 PM)

Thursday, 7-8 (1:55 PM – 3:50 PM)

TURLINGTON 2334



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*. This list is not exhaustive, and may change during the course to include, for example, documentaries about Israeli cinema or filmmakers' biographies. The course will also make use of the Jewish Film Festival organized by the Center for Jewish Studies during the Fall (the program will be distributed) and screen and discuss the current International Jewish Film Production. **Learning goals: the students will learn to think critically about the seminal films of Jewish, Israeli and Jewish-American Cinema, and essays about them.**

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 (30% of the grade). There will be a mid-term (30%) and a final paper (30%). Collective class presentations will be assigned, to include reports from Jewish Film Festival. Attendance is obligatory. The Honors Code and the Flu/Covid Policy of the University of Florida will be observed. The syllabus is not final, and may be changed during the course of 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 listserv and or canvas.

The class will also on occasion meet via ZOOM, to be announced on Canvas and via listserv. Please plan to attend all meetings. Two absences during the semester are allowed without excuse. Other absences will require written excuse such as a doctor's note.

Syllabus, Jewish-American Cinema

Tuesday marked as 1
Period 7 (1:55 PM - 2:45 PM)

Thursday marked as 2
Period 7 - 8 (1:55 PM - 3:50 PM)

Week one, Aug. 25-27

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

2 *Fiddler on the Roof*, Screen, Amazon Prime

Week two, Aug. 30-Sept. 1

1 *Laughing in Darkness*, Library UF, also YouTube; *Fiddler on the Roof*, Screen, Amazon Prime;

2 ***first group presentation, Group 1.***

Week three, Sept. 6-Sept. 8

1 *The Jazz Singer*; essays provided by instructor; Screen, YouTube

2 *second group presentation, Group 2.*

Week four, Sept. 13-Sept. 15

1 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>;

2 *third group presentation, Group 3.*

Week five, September 20-Sept. 22

1 Week Billy Wilder, *Some Like It Hot*, Amazon;
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Death_Mills; Instructor's lecture and general
discussion; *Billy Wilder Speaks*, Amazon

2 *Fourth group presentation, Group 4.*

Week six, September 27-September 29

1 Rosh Hashanah, No Class, High Holiday Observation

2 Thursday in class: Mel Brooks, *Producers, Blazing Saddles* (Selection). **Group one
presentation**

Instructor's lecture and general discussion

October 2 to October 19, Jewish Film Festival (program)

Week seven, October 4-October 6

1 Tuesday October 4, Yom Kippur, High Holiday Observation, no class.

2 **Collective Midterm Presentations (each group, and individual presentations)
on both Tu and Th; MIDTERM PAPER DUE BY evening October 14**

Week eight, October 11-October 13

1 Steven Spielberg, *Schindler's List; Raiders of the Lost Arc*

2 **Group two presentation, *Schindler's List; Raiders of the Lost Arc***

Week nine, October 18-October 20

1 Quentin Tarantino, *Inglorious Basterds*

2 **Group three Presentation, *Inglorious Basterds***

Week ten, October 25-October 27

1 Barbara Streisand, *Yentl*; Read Isak Basevis Singer, *Yentl*;
Watch *Isaac in America*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YPDowgxqqjA>

2 **Group four presentation, *Yentl*, Singer.**

November 1 to December 8, Jewish Film Festival (program)

Week eleven, November 1-November 3

1 Amie Heckerling, *Clueless*; Susan Seidelman, *Desperately Seeking Susan*; *Sex and the City*

2 **Two group contribution, Heckerling and Seidelman (group 1 and 2)**

Week Twelve November 8-November 10

1 Nora Ephron, *When Harry Met Sally*; *Sleepless in Seattle*

2 **Two group contribution, *When Harry Met Sally*; *Sleepless in Seattle* (group 3 and 4)**

Week Thirteen November 15 to November 17

1 The Coen Brothers, *A Serious Man*

2 **All groups contribute, *A Serious Man*, instructor's lecture and all class discussion**

Week Fourteen November 22 to November 24

1 *The Tribe*, In class screening and discussion.

2 November 24, Thanksgiving, No Class

Week Fifteen November 29-December 1

1 Student individual final project presentation/group presentations

2 Student individual final project presentation/group presentations

Week Sixteen December 6

1 Instructor's Course Summary. COURSE ENDS. **Final Paper Due December 9 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)