

Spring 2010 JST 110

Writing their Way: Jewish Women Between Eastern Europe and America

CRN# 83039
Kelman

TR 1:40–3pm

Instructor: Zohar Weiman–

This course explores Jewish women's transition from Eastern Europe to America through works of fiction, non-fictional narratives, poetry and film, alongside queer and feminist theory. Beyond immigration, this course is about imagination, memory, legacy and the queer construction of history. We will read a wide range of texts by women writing English and Yiddish (in English translation), and will discuss the contexts in which these texts were produced, be it the Lower East Side of New York in the 1920 or the feminist movement of the 1970's. We will read these texts both as historical documents and as negotiations with the production of history itself. Through them, we will learn about Jewish literature and culture focusing on the status of women. The particular confluence of conditions faced by Jewish women making this transition will also enable us to question social constructions of gender and race as they are manifest in disparate settings. Indeed, both the category "Jewish" and the category "woman" will be interrogated throughout the course.

Special focus will be given to Jewish feminist and lesbian writers who began the project of creating a Jewish women's history both as part of the larger feminist project and in relation specifically to work of women of color. We will also explore queer issues, looking at histories that rediscover and even reinvent a queer past that dominant history has erased. The focus on women and queer subjects will not just enable us to recover alternative histories, it will open an alternative model for recovering history, a model that can be applied across boundaries of genders and cultures. This means that students from various backgrounds will be able to use the theoretical tools we develop to examine other cultures they are interested in.

This course does not require a background in Jewish Studies, and students from all majors are encouraged to participate. This course can be counted towards the Women's and Gender Studies major.

Required texts include: Beyond the Pale by Elena Dykewoman, Liphshitz 6 or 2 Angry Blondes by T. Cooper, Gender and Assimilation in Modern Jewish History: Roles and Representations of Women by Paula Hyman. A reader will include: Short Stories and Selections by Mary Antin, Anzia Yeziarska, Celia Dropkin, Grace Paley and others. Poetry and essays by Irena Klepfisz, Adrienne Rich, Gloria Anzaldua and others. Films will include Hungry Hearts (1922), Hester Street (1975) and Man without a World (1991).

Course requirements include: several short papers and a presentation.

For questions, please contact: Jewish Studies jst@ucdavis.edu.

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