

JEWS IN CINEMA

Spring, 2023

Instructor: Professor Dragan Kujundzic

JST 4936

LIT 4930

dragan@ufl.edu

Tu: Period 8-9 (3:00-4:55 PM)

Th: Period 9 (4:05-4:55)

Room: TUR 120K (Seminar Room, Center for Jewish Studies)

Office: 1120 Turlington Hall, Center for Jewish Studies

Office Hours, Thursday, 1-2pm in 1120 Turlington, and by appointment

The course will introduce students to the rich history of Jewish cinema and the latest critical and theoretical literature about it. Particular attention will be paid to the ways cinema constructs the figure of the Jew in terms of gender, race, politics or citizenship (Israel). 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 listserve 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.

**Tuesday, marked as 2
Period 8-9 (3:00-4:55)
Thursday marked as 1
Period 9 (4:05-4:55)**

Week one, 01/10-01/12

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

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

Week two, 01/17-01/19

2 Screen: *Laughing in Darkness*, Library UF, also YouTube.

1 Discussion, Instructor's lecture and collective participation.

Week three, 01/24-01/26

2 First presentation, group 1. *Fiddler on the Roof*, *Laughing in Darkness*

1 Introduction, *Jazz Singer*

Screen: *Jazz Singer*. Essays provided by instructor; screen, YouTube.

Week four, 01/31-02/02

2 Second group presentation, Group 2. *The Jazz Singer* and essays.

1 **Screen:** 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>.

Week five, 02/07-02/09

2 **Third group presentation, Group 3.** *The Great Dictator*, Gavras, and articles.

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

Week six, 02/14-02/16

2 **Fourth group presentation, Group 4.** *Some Like It Hot*, Wilder

1 Mel Brooks and Susan Stroman (two versions), *Producers*, and *Blazing Saddles* (selection). Instructor's lecture
Screen: *Producers*

Week seven, 02/21-02/23

2 **Fourth group presentations, Group 1 and 2.** *Producers 1 and 2.*

1 Barbara Streisand, *Yentl*; Read Isaac Basevis Singer, *Yentl*;
Screen: *Yentl* (available on various platforms)
Screen: *Funny Girl* (available various platforms)
Screen: *Isaac in America*
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YPDowgxqqjA>
Read: *Yentl* by Isaak Basevis Singer (handout)
Introduction by Instructor.

Week eight, 02/28-03/02

2 **Fifth group presentation, Group 1 and 2.** *Yentl* (film and story)
Screen in class: *Dimona Twist*. Available for streaming, UF Library

1 *Dimona Twist*, Discussion

Week nine, 03/07-03/09

2 *Sallah* (Topol).
Screen: *Sallah* in Class

1 Discussion, *Sallah*
Screen: *Kissing Jessica Stein*

Screen: *Desperately Seeking Susan*

Week ten, 03/14-03/16

Spring Break

Week eleven, 03/21-03/23

2 **Sixth group presentation, Groups 3 and 4, *Kissing Jessica Stein*, and *Desperately Seeking Susan***

Midterm Presentations individual and group.

1 Midterm presentations, individual and group, continue.

MIDTERM DUE ONLINE, 03/23 by evening.

Screen: *The Pianist*

Screen: *Fearless Vampire Killers*

Week Twelve, 03/28-03/30

2 Discussion, *The Pianist*, *Fearless Vampire Killers*, ***Seventh group presentation, Groups 1 and 2***

1 Conclusion, Polanski.

Screen: *Inglorious Basterds*, *Tarantino*

Week thirteen, 04/04-04/06

2 Discussion, *Inglorious Basterds*. ***Eight group presentation, Groups 3 and 4.***

1 Introduction, Coen Brothers' *Serious Man*; Woody Allen, *New York Story*

Screen: *Serious Man*

Screen: *New York Story*

Week fourteen, 04/11-04/13

2 Instructors lecture on *Serious Man* with class participation

1 Instructions for the final projects.

Week fifteen, 04/18-04/20

1 Final project presentations, individual and group

2 Final project presentations, individual and group

Week sixteen, 04/25

1 Classes End. *Concluding remarks.* Paper due, April 26 by 17:00.