

ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF JEWISH-AMERICAN SHORT FICTION

Coordinator: Gustav Seliger

We read short stories by Jewish American writers from the early twentieth century to the present time, with the goal of gaining a greater understanding of this literature. We study how these stories reflect the cultural zeitgeist of the times. Generally, the earlier writers were not very religious; they assimilated easily into mainstream American society. Several younger writers like Englander, Goodman and Horn practice traditional Judaism. We discuss issues of religious observance and ethnic identity, and important historical events, including the Holocaust and the creation of the state of Israel, to come to a deeper understanding and appreciation of how the Jewish American culture has evolved in America and how it has been chronicled. Universal themes of literature depicting the human condition are considered.

Readings:

Readings will be presented in a course pack at an approximate cost of \$20.

Gustav Seliger has recently retired from a long career in Medicine.

*** * * * * Syllabus – A Work in Progress * * * * ***

- Week 1** I. B. SINGER; Gimpel the Fool; The Spinoza of Market Street (The reality of life in eastern Europe ; it's not exactly Fiddler on the Roof)
- Week 2** Anzia Yezierska America and I; Alexander Godin ; My dead brother comes to America (immigrant life was rather grim)
- Week 3** Bernard Malamud The Silver Crown , The magic barrel
- Week 4** Grace Paley; The loudest voice; Saul Bellow A silver dish
- Week 5** Film ; Angel Levine;[starring Zero Mostel , Harry Belafonte] [B. Malamud] [please read the story]

- Week 6** Cynthia Ozick; The Pagan Rabbi , Levitation
- Week 7** I. B. Singer; A party in Miami Beach; C.Ozick , Bloodshed
- Week 8** Allegra Goodman , The Family Markowitz; Nathan Englander . The Gilgul of Park Avenue
- Week 9** Nathan Englander; The Twenty Seventh Man, Reb Kringle
- Week 10** Dara Horn, Readers Digest; Michael Chabon , Citizen Cohn
- Week 11** Nicole Krauss, The Last Words on Earth ; An Arrangement of Light
- Week 12** Nathan Englander; Free Fruit For Young Widows