

ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF JEWISH-AMERICAN SHORT FICTION: FROM POLAND TO POLO

Coordinator: Gustav Seliger

We read and discuss 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. Most of the earlier writers were not very religious and easily assimilated into mainstream American society. Several of the new young writers - Englander, Goodman and Horn - practice a traditional form of Judaism. We look at issues of religious observance and ethnic identity, as well as 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. In addition, we discuss universal themes of literature in depicting the human condition.

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.

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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 Melamud; The Silver Crown , The magic barrel

Week 4: Grace Paley; The loudest voice ; Saul Bellow A silver dish

Week 5: Watch the film *Angel Levine* starring Zero Mostel and Harry Belafonte. The full length film is available on Youtube. Read the

story by B. Melamud in the coursepack.

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