

Term Information

Effective Term Autumn 2026
[Previous Value](#) [Autumn 2022](#)

Course Change Information

What change is being proposed? (If more than one, what changes are being proposed?)

An update of Yiddish 2241 to the new number 3241 and updating its GE status from Foundation to Theme.

What is the rationale for the proposed change(s)?

GLL has a new Yiddish Program Director, who will instruct this course, which was due for an update.

What are the programmatic implications of the proposed change(s)?

(e.g. program requirements to be added or removed, changes to be made in available resources, effect on other programs that use the course)?

The course will continue to be cross-listed with Jewish Studies.

Is approval of the request contingent upon the approval of other course or curricular program request? No

Is this a request to withdraw the course? No

General Information

Course Bulletin Listing/Subject Area	Yiddish
Fiscal Unit/Academic Org	Germanic Languages & Lit - D0547
College/Academic Group	Arts and Sciences
Level/Career	Undergraduate
Course Number/Catalog	3241
Previous Value	2241
Course Title	Yiddish Culture
Transcript Abbreviation	Yiddish Culture
Course Description	A bastardized German, a woman's vernacular, a dying tongue, a radical language—this course traces the shifting labels attached to Yiddish, from its early modern beginnings to its contemporary status as a language of mourning and nostalgia, Jewish humor, Hasidic isolation, and Jewish radicalism. Through poetry, fiction, essays, and film, we explore what Yiddish can tell us about the modern world.
Previous Value	Introductory survey of political, social, ideological, and religious trends as reflected in Yiddish culture, especially folklore and literature.
Semester Credit Hours/Units	Fixed: 3

Offering Information

Length Of Course	14 Week, 12 Week, 8 Week, 7 Week, 6 Week, 4 Week
Flexibly Scheduled Course	Never
Does any section of this course have a distance education component?	No
Grading Basis	Letter Grade
Repeatable	No
Course Components	Lecture
Grade Roster Component	Lecture
Credit Available by Exam	No
Admission Condition Course	No
Off Campus	Never
Campus of Offering	Columbus, Lima, Mansfield, Marion, Newark, Wooster

Prerequisites and Exclusions

Prerequisites/Corequisites

Exclusions

Not open to students with credit for 2242, JewshSt 2241, or JewshSt 3241.

[Previous Value](#)

Not open to students with credit for 241 or JewshSt 2241.

Electronically Enforced

Yes

[Previous Value](#)

No

Cross-Listings

Cross-Listings

Cross-listed in JewshSt.

Subject/CIP Code

Subject/CIP Code

16.0599

Subsidy Level

General Studies Course

Intended Rank

Freshman, Sophomore, Junior, Senior

Requirement/Elective Designation

Traditions, Cultures, and Transformations

The course is an elective (for this or other units) or is a service course for other units

[Previous Value](#)

General Education course:

Culture and Ideas; Global Studies (International Issues successors); Historical and Cultural Studies

Course Details

Course goals or learning objectives/outcomes

- please see syllabus, pages 2-3

[Previous Value](#)

Content Topic List

- please see syllabus, pages 7-12

[Previous Value](#)

- [National identity](#)
- [Language and culture](#)
- [Material culture](#)
- [Communal structure and organization](#)
- [Role of religion](#)
- [Foodways](#)
- [Political trends](#)
- [Tradition and modernity](#)
- [Diaspora and geographic diversity](#)

Sought Concurrence

No

[Previous Value](#)

Attachments

- Yiddish-JewshSt 3241 GE Theme Course Submission Worksheet.pdf: GE Theme Worksheet

(Other Supporting Documentation. Owner: Miller,Natascha)

- Syllabus Yiddish-JewshSt 3241 AU26 23 Oct 2025.pdf: Yiddish 3241 Syllabus

(Syllabus. Owner: Miller,Natascha)

- Yiddish-JewishStudies_2241_payne_AU17.pdf: previous 2241 Syllabus

(Syllabus. Owner: Miller,Natascha)

Comments

- oopla. I've uploaded the old 2241 syllabus. Also, Carrie in NESA is almost ready to submit her request ... should be coming soon. Thank you! (by Miller,Natascha on 11/04/2025 03:41 PM)
- Please also upload syllabus of the 2241 version of the course. That way the subcommittee can ascertain how the course has changed. (by Vankeerbergen,Bernadette Chantal on 11/04/2025 03:04 PM)

Workflow Information

Status	User(s)	Date/Time	Step
Submitted	Miller,Natascha	11/04/2025 01:23 PM	Submitted for Approval
Approved	Taleghani-Nikazm,Carmen	11/04/2025 02:56 PM	Unit Approval
Revision Requested	Vankeerbergen,Bernadette Chantal	11/04/2025 03:04 PM	College Approval
Submitted	Miller,Natascha	11/04/2025 03:41 PM	Submitted for Approval
Approved	Taleghani-Nikazm,Carmen	11/04/2025 06:35 PM	Unit Approval
Approved	Vankeerbergen,Bernadette Chantal	11/10/2025 09:33 AM	College Approval
Pending Approval	Jenkins,Mary Ellen Bigler Neff,Jennifer Vankeerbergen,Bernadette Chantal Steele,Rachel Lea	11/10/2025 09:33 AM	ASCCAO Approval

Yiddish / Jewish Studies 3241: Yiddish Culture

Autumn 2026

germanic.osu.edu / nesa.osu.edu

GEN Theme: Traditions, Cultures, and Transformations

DAYS-TIMES – BLDG ROOM – Course #

Course Overview

Instructor: Saul Zaritt

Email address: zaritt.1@osu.edu

Office: Hagerty 421

Office hours: by appointment

germanic.osu.edu

Course Description

A bastardized German, a jargon, a woman's vernacular, an old-world language, a dying tongue, a Hasidic language, a queer language, a radical language—these are just a few of the ways that Yiddish has been labeled over its one-thousand-year history. This course will trace the shifting images attached to the language of Eastern European Jewry, from its early modern beginnings as a tool for translating between Jewish and non-Jewish cultures to its contemporary status as a language of mourning and nostalgia, Jewish American humor, Hasidic isolation, and Jewish radicalism. Through poetry, fiction, essays, and film, we will discover what this language can tell us about modern Jewish culture and what we might learn along the way about diaspora and migrant cultures more generally. All texts will be read in translation.

This course is a GEN Traditions, Cultures, and Transformations course

Goals:

1. Successful students will analyze an important topic or idea at a more advanced and in-depth level than in the Foundations component. [Note: In this context, “advanced” refers to courses that are e.g., synthetic, rely on research or cutting-edge findings, or deeply engage with the subject matter, among other possibilities.]
2. Successful students will integrate approaches to the theme by making connections to out-of-classroom experiences with academic knowledge or across disciplines and/or to work they have done in previous classes and that they anticipate doing in future.
3. Successful students will engage in a systematic assessment of how cultures and sub-cultures develop and interact, historically or in contemporary society.
4. Successful students will engage in a systematic assessment of differences among societies, institutions, and individuals' experience within traditions and cultures.

Expected Learning Outcomes:

Successful students are able to:

- 1.1. Engage in critical and logical thinking about the topic or idea of the theme.
- 1.2. Engage in an advance, in-depth, scholarly exploration of the topic or idea of the theme.
- 2.1. Identify, describe, and synthesize approaches or experiences as they apply to the theme.
- 2.2. Demonstrate a developing sense of self as a learner through reflection, self-assessment, and creative work, building on prior experiences to respond to new and challenging contexts.
- 3.1. Describe the influence of an aspect of culture (e.g., religious belief, gender roles, institutional organization, technology, epistemology, philosophy, scientific discovery, etc.) on at least one historical or contemporary issue.
- 3.2. Analyze the impact of a “big” idea or technological advancement in creating a major and long-lasting change in a specific culture.
- 3.3. Examine the interactions among dominant and sub-cultures.
- 3.4. Explore changes and continuities over time within a culture or society.
- 4.1. Recognize and explain differences, similarities, and disparities among institutions, organizations, cultures, societies, and/or individuals.
- 4.2. Explain ways in which categories such as race, ethnicity, and gender and perceptions of difference impact individual outcomes and broader societal issues.

How this course meets the Goals and ELOs

This course examines Yiddish culture and society from the early modern period to the present via a close analysis of historical texts alongside contemporary media—in Yiddish, in translation, and as integrated into other cultures (for example, thinking about the many Yiddish words that have been incorporated into American English). This roughly thousand-year history spans the many upheavals and paradigm shifts of the modern world, from the introduction of the printing press to

the contemporary development of online language learning and its impact of minor language revivals. At the same time, this course examines those aspects of Yiddish that persist throughout its history, confronting how its cross-cultural aspects—its capacity to bridge between Jewish and non-Jewish worlds, its status as a language of migration, the perception that Yiddish is a “woman’s” language—present varying models for how to navigate difference in our global society. Students will approach Yiddish’s various and shifting images through in-depth class discussion, accompanied by appropriate secondary readings and short lectures that will provide all students with background to engage with class material. Yiddish is a language whose history touches on some of the central challenges of modernity, and the study of its vast and varied archives will give students the opportunity to reflect on the powers of language and cultural change.

HOW THIS COURSE WORKS

Format of instruction: Lecture. In person. 3 contact hours per week. Credit hours and work expectations: This is a 3-credit-hour course. According to Ohio State policy, students should expect around 3 hours per week of time spent on direct instruction (instructor content and Carmen activities, for example) in addition to 6 hours of homework (reading and assignment preparation, for example) to receive a grade of (C) average.

Technology

We’ll be using **Top Hat** for attendance, so you’ll need an internet connection in class, whether on your phone or another mobile device.

Course Materials

All assigned readings and other media will be available via Carmen.

How Your Grade is Calculated

Attendance: 20 points

Introduction: 5 points

Quiz—some basics!: 5 points

Bi-weekly quizzes: 10 points

Midterm exam: 15 points

Your Yiddish Dictionary: 30 points

Final exam: 15 points

ASSIGNMENTS

Introduction

Introduce yourself in the Carmen discussion forum. Tell us who you are. Then tell us one Yiddish word you think you know. Don’t worry about whether you get the definition right! The goal is to figure out what our collective Yiddish vocabulary is and why we even know these words in the first place!

Quiz: Some basics!

This is a quick quiz on terms and concepts, based on the first group of readings and lectures covering the basic history of Yiddish and Eastern European Jewry. This will be administered via

Carmen. It is designed to make sure the class collectively has adequately absorbed the background material and is prepared for the rest of the semester.

Bi-weekly quizzes

Bi-weekly quizzes are administered via Carmen. They consist of two questions. The first, worth 2 points, is always: What are two questions you have about the course material? These questions can be as short as a sentence or as long as a paragraph. It should not be an informational question about something you could google or discover through further research. Rather, please share what irked you about a certain text, what you remain curious about, what question asked by the text got you thinking. The second question, also worth 2 points, will vary, but will always draw on content of the reading assigned for that week. Using a few sentences, you will demonstrate what you learned about Yiddish from the last two weeks' readings. I will drop your lowest two quiz scores. The quizzes as a whole make up 10% of the final grade.

Quizzes are designed with multiple goals in mind: 1) to help you articulate what about the course is animating your learning; 2) to guide me in designing lectures; and 3) to focus your attention on the details of the readings, ultimately allowing you to engage in a systematic assessment of Yiddish's changing status, from the early modern period to the present.

Midterm exam

The midterm is administered during regular class time. It will consist of three essay questions, each to be answered in a single paragraph. Strong answers will demonstrate a command of a) the different modes of Yiddish studied thus far during the semester, b) the relationship of Yiddish to surrounding cultures, languages, and communities, and c) the concepts and frameworks applied towards understanding the migratory and diasporic aspects of the language.

Your Yiddish Dictionary

Throughout the semester we will be coming across many different Yiddish terms—and often the meanings of these words will change over time and between different historical contexts! Your assignment throughout the semester, to be handed in before the final exam, is to compile a list of at least ten terms that caught your attention. Include your definition(s) of the terms and links to examples of their usage with your explanations as to how these terms function in context. The goal of this assignment is to help you develop a sense of how language functions in different contexts and how language changes over time, in particular through the upheavals of modernity and our contemporary moment. This assignment is also a way for you to take ownership over learning and develop a personal log for parts of the course that have particular meaning to you.

Final Exam

The final exam will be similar to the midterm exam but will include a section where you reflect on the course, detailing what course material was most impactful for you and giving you opportunity to demonstrate what you learned more generally about language and culture.

Grading scale

93–100: A

90–92.9: A-

87–89.9: B+

83–86.9: B
80–82.9: B-
77–79.9: C+
73–76.9: C
70 –72.9: C-
67 –69.9: D+
60 –66.9: D-
Below 60: E

Preparation for Class

Students are expected to do active reading of assigned texts and viewing of assigned videos in advance of class sessions for which they are listed in the schedule of reading below so that they can follow lectures and ask questions. “Active reading” means taking notes as you read. Those notes might be physical or electronic, but you should have access to them during class discussions. Active reading will best prepare you for exams and assignments. Expect to read texts carefully and more than once.

OTHER COURSE POLICIES

Tone and civility: Our goal is a supportive learning community where everyone feels safe and where people can disagree amicably. Above all, please remember to be respectful and thoughtful.

Written assignments: Your written assignments, including discussion posts, should be your own original work. In formal assignments, you should follow MLA or Chicago style to cite the ideas and words of any research sources. You are encouraged to ask a trusted person to proofread your assignments before you turn them in—but no one else should revise or rewrite your work.

Reusing past work: In general, you are prohibited in university courses from turning in work from a past class to your current class, even if you modify it. If you want to build on past research or revisit a topic you've explored in previous courses, please discuss the situation with me.

Collaboration and informal peer-review: Study groups are encouraged, but remember that comparing answers on a quiz, exam, or assignment is not permitted. If you're unsure about a particular situation, please feel free just to ask ahead of time.

Ohio State’s Academic Integrity Policy: It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term “academic misconduct” includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct <http://studentlife.osu.edu/csc/>. If you have any questions about the above policy or what constitutes academic misconduct in this course, please contact me.

Copyright disclaimer: The materials used in connection with this course may be subject to copyright protection and are only for the use of students officially enrolled in the course for the educational purposes associated with the course. Copyright law must be considered before copying, retaining, or disseminating materials outside of the course.

Statement on Title IX: All students and employees at Ohio State have the right to work and learn in an environment free from harassment and discrimination based on sex or gender, and the university can arrange interim measures, provide support resources, and explain investigation options, including referral to confidential resources. If you or someone you know has been harassed or discriminated against based on your sex or gender, including sexual harassment, sexual assault, relationship violence, stalking, or sexual exploitation, you may find information about your rights and options at titleix.osu.edu or by contacting the Ohio State Title IX Coordinator at titleix@osu.edu. Title IX is part of the Office of Institutional Equity (OIE) at Ohio State, which responds to all bias-motivated incidents of harassment and discrimination, such as race, religion, national origin and disability. For more information on OIE, visit equity.osu.edu or email equity@osu.edu. Please note that I am a MANDATORY REPORTER. This means that if I am informed of any event of sexual harassment or misconduct affecting an OSU student, I am required to inform the Title IX coordinator who will likely contact the affected student to offer help.

ACCESSIBILITY

Accommodations for Disability and COVID: The university strives to maintain a healthy and accessible environment to support student learning in and out of the classroom. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers based on your disability (including mental health, chronic, or temporary medical conditions), please let me know immediately so that we can privately discuss options. To establish reasonable accommodations, I may request that you register with Student Life Disability Services. After registration, make arrangements with me as soon as possible to discuss your accommodations so that they may be implemented in a timely fashion. If you are isolating while waiting for a COVID-19 test result, please let me know immediately. Those testing positive for COVID-19 should refer to the Safe and Healthy Buckeyes site for resources. Beyond five days of the required COVID-19 isolation period, I may rely on Student Life Disability Services to establish further reasonable accommodations. You can connect with them at slds@osu.edu; 614- 292-3307; or slds.osu.edu.

Accessibility of course technology: This course requires use of Carmen (Ohio State's learning management system). If you need additional services to use this technology, please request accommodations with your instructor.

Statement on religious accommodations: Ohio State has had a longstanding practice of making reasonable academic accommodations for students' religious beliefs and practices in accordance with applicable law. In 2023, Ohio State updated its practice to align with new state legislation. Under this new provision, students must be in early communication with their instructors regarding any known accommodation requests for religious beliefs and practices, providing notice of specific dates for which they request alternative accommodations within 14 days after the first instructional day of the course. Instructors in turn shall not question the sincerity of a

student's religious or spiritual belief system in reviewing such requests and shall keep requests for accommodations confidential. With sufficient notice, instructors will provide students with reasonable alternative accommodations with regard to examinations and other academic requirements with respect to students' sincerely held religious beliefs and practices by allowing up to three absences each semester for the student to attend or participate in religious activities. Examples of religious accommodations can include, but are not limited to, rescheduling an exam, altering the time of a student's presentation, allowing make-up assignments to substitute for missed class work, or flexibility in due dates or research responsibilities. If concerns arise about a requested accommodation, instructors are to consult their tenure initiating unit head for assistance. A student's request for time off shall be provided if the student's sincerely held religious belief or practice severely affects the student's ability to take an exam or meet an academic requirement and the student has notified their instructor, in writing during the first 14 days after the course begins, of the date of each absence. Although students are required to provide notice within the first 14 days after a course begins, instructors are strongly encouraged to work with the student to provide a reasonable accommodation if a request is made outside the notice period. A student may not be penalized for an absence approved under this policy. If students have questions or disputes related to academic accommodations, they should contact their course instructor, and then their department or college office. For questions or to report discrimination or harassment based on religion, individuals should contact the Office of Institutional Equity.

Your mental health: As a student you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance or reduce a student's ability to participate in daily activities. The Ohio State University offers services to assist you with addressing these and other concerns you may be experiencing. If you or someone you know are suffering from any of the aforementioned conditions, you can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus via the Office of Student Life's Counseling and Consultation Service (CCS) by visiting ccs.osu.edu or calling 614-292-5766. CCS is located on the 4th Floor of the Younkin Success Center and 10th Floor of Lincoln Tower. You can reach an on call counselor when CCS is closed at 614-292-5766 and 24 hour emergency help is also available 24/7 by dialing 988 to reach the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline.

COURSE SCHEDULE

UNIT 1 – Defining Yiddish

Week 1

Session 1: Introduction—You know more Yiddish than you think!

- Interview with Hershel Vider about “Bubbie Zisl”:
<https://aheym.com/interview/?id=1393>
- “Zoey Deutch Quizzes Jimmy on His Yiddish Vocabulary – The Tonight Show”:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fsMHFSQKNes&t=143s>

Session 2: Yiddish Histories

- Dovid Katz, “Yiddish” in *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*: <https://encyclopedia.yivo.org/article/235>
- Jeffrey Shandler, *Yiddish: Biography of a Language* (excerpts)

By the end of week 1, please be sure to submit your “Introduction” post on Carmen

Week 2

Session 1: Yiddish in the Shtetl

- Samuel Kassow, “Shtetl” in *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*: <https://encyclopedia.yivo.org/article/27>

Session 2: Yiddish Politics

- Dovid Katz, “A Yiddish Romance with Powerlessness” in *Yiddish and Power* (2015), 7–24.
- David E. Fishman, *The Rise of Modern Yiddish Culture* (2005), 3–18.
- Rokhl Kafrissen, “What I Wish People Knew About Yiddishists,” *Alma*, 29 March 2019, <https://www.heyalma.com/what-i-wish-people-knew-about-yiddishists/>

Week 3

Session 1: Continued discussion of Yiddish Politics

Session 2: Quiz—Some Basics!

UNIT 2 – Yiddish and the Politics of Translation

Week 4

Session 1-2 : The Early Yiddish Epic

- Elye Bokher, *Bove bukh* (1508) in *Early Yiddish Epic*, ed. and trans. Jerold Frakes (2014), 238–61. (The pdf includes the whole text, but you only have to read the first twenty pages or so, which includes Frakes's introduction.)
- Dovid Katz, “Gentile Culture Empowers Simple Jews” in *Yiddish and Power* (2015), 27–44.

Week 5

Session 1-2: Tevye in Translation

- Selection from Sholem Aleichem's *Tevye* (1895–1917)—“Today’s Children”
- Scene from *Fiddler on the Roof* (1971): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gRdfX7ut8gw>.
- Scene from *Fidler oyfn dakh* [Fiddler in Yiddish] (2018): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ugfT1766Oqk>

- Jesse Green, "Review: A Yiddish 'Fiddler on the Roof'? Sounds Crazy, Nu?" *New York Times*, 17 July 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/07/17/theater/review-yiddish-fiddler-on-the-roof.html>

Quiz 1 on Canvas due by the end of the week

UNIT 3 – Yiddish and Gender

Week 6

Sessions 1-2: Women's Prayer in Yiddish

- Selections from women's prayers (tkhines), and Chava Weissler, "Tkhines" in YIVO Encyclopedia: <https://encyclopedia.yivo.org/article/2146>
- Der tkhines proyekt: <https://opensiddur.org/profile/der-tekhines-proyekt>
- Tsenerene (the "woman's bible" first published in the 17th century); Jacob Elbaum and Chava Turniansky "Tsene-rene" in *YIVO Encyclopedia*: <https://encyclopedia.yivo.org/article/2257>

Week 7

Session 1: MIDTERM

Session 2: Yiddish Women's Poetry

- Poetry by Celia Dropkin ("Circus Dancer" and "Adam") and Anna Margolin ("Once I was a Youth") and Irena Klepfisz ("Etlekhe verter oyf mame-loshn / A Few Words in the Mother Tongue")

Week 8

Sessions 1-2: Queer Yiddishkeit

- Alicia Svigals, "Whither Queer Yiddishkeit?" *In geveb*, October 2021, <https://ingeveb.org/blog/whither-queer-yiddishkayt>.
- Katherine Balthius / Olke, "Froyen": <https://www.heyalma.com/indie-yiddish-pop-singer-olke-will-be-your-new-obsession/> link to music: <https://open.spotify.com/album/5cn0GkrV0vI851wnxGl8E7?>

UNIT 4 – Yiddish and Diaspora Politics

Week 9

Session 1: Yiddish Socialism, Yiddish Nationalism

- Vladimir Medem, "The Worldwide Jewish Nation" (1911)
- Simon Dubnov, "Jews as a Spiritual (Cultural-Historical) Nation among Political Nations" (1907)
- Chaim Zhitlowsky, "A Jew to Jews" (1892) and "Why Only Yiddish?" (1900)

Session 2: Contemporary Yiddish Socialism?

- Molly Crabapple, "My Great-Grandfather the Bundist," *New York Review of Books*, 6 October 2018, <https://www.nybooks.com/daily/2018/10/06/my-great-grandfather-the-bundist>
- Rokhl Kafrissen, "My Great-Grandfather Wasn't a Bundist," *Medium*, December 2018, <https://medium.com/@rokhlk/my-great-grandfather-wasnt-a-bundist-4fba2f186ab9>
- Joshua Meyers, "The Socialist History that Explains Bernie Sanders' Jewishness," *The Forward*, 26 September 2019
- Daniel Kahn, "The March of the Jobless Corps," <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6KFVVKFxr60>

Quiz 2 due by the end of the week

UNIT 5 – Yiddish and the Religious Imagination

Week 10

Session 1: Hasidism

- A selection of Hasidic folk tales
- David Assaf, "Hasidism: Historical Overview" in *YIVO Encyclopedia*: <https://encyclopedia.yivo.org/article/9>

Session 2: Yiddish and Contemporary Ultra-Orthodox Life

- Selection of "Shomrim" cards
- "In Hasidic Enclaves, Failing Private Schools Flush With Public Money," *New York Times*, 11 September 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/11/nyregion/hasidic-yeshivas-schools-new-york.html>
- Rokhl Schaechter, "Why The New York Times translated its Hasidic yeshiva investigation into Yiddish," *Forward*, 12 September 2022, <https://forward.com/forverts-in-english/517577/why-the-new-york-times-translated-its-hasidic-yeshiva-investigation-into-yiddish/>
- Songs of Lipa Schmeltzer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lvwpNkJd82w>
- Songs of Rikki Rose: https://www.instagram.com/riki_rose/?hl=en, https://www.youtube.com/@riki_rose

UNIT 6 – Yiddish and American Popular Culture

Week 11

Sessions 1-2: Yiddish and American Humor

- Markfield, "The Yiddishization of American Humor" (1965)
- Leo Rosten, the preface to *The Joys of Yiddish* (1968), xi–xxviii
- Belle Barth, *If I Embarrass You, Tell Your Friends* (LP) (1960)
- "Coffee Talk with Linda Richman," SNL (1991-1994)
- Billy Crystal, from Mr. Saturday Night (2022), at 2022 Tony Awards
- Rokhl Kafrisse, "Kockleffels and the Bridges to Memory," <https://rokh1.blogspot.com/2015/06/kockleffels-and-bridges-to-memory.html>

Quiz 3 due by the end of the week

Week 12

Sessions 1-2: Yiddish and Race

- Jennifer Young, "Beyond the Color Line: Jews, Blacks, and the American Racial Imagination," *In geveb* (June 2016): <https://ingeveb.org/articles/beyond-the-color-line-jews-blacks-and-the-american-racial-imagination>
- "Peter Guber Says Word Unintentional," *ESPN*, 28 October 2014, https://www.espn.com/nba/story/_/id/11779464/peter-guber-golden-state-warriors-co-owner-regrets-writing-hoodish-company-email
- Anthony Russell, "Translating Black Lives Matter into Yiddish," *Jewish Currents*, 5 June 2020, <https://jewishcurrents.org/translating-black-lives-matter-into-yiddish>
- Jonah S. Boyarin, Ri J. Turner and Arun Viswanath, "'Black Lives Matter' and Talking about Blackness in Yiddish: Stakes, Considerations, and Open Questions," *In geveb* (October 2020): <https://ingeveb.org/blog/black-lives-matter-in-yiddish>

UNIT 7 – Yiddish and Nostalgia: The Case of Klezmer

Week 13

Sessions 1-2: Postwar Traditions Renewed

- The Barry Sisters, "Rozhenkes mit mandlen" (1957)
- The Klezmatics, "Ale brider" (1988)
- Postmodern Jukebox, "Talk Dirty to Me" (2014)
- Tsibele, "Mir veln zey iberlebn" (2018)

Quiz 4 due by the end of the week

Week 14

Session 1: Europe, Klezmer and Jewishness

- Zupfgeigenhansel, "Tsen brider" from *Jiddische Lieder* (1979)
- Giora Feidman, "Yewish Wedding" (2009)
- Ellen Gruber, "Klezmer in the Wilderness," in *Virtually Jewish* (2002), 183–225

THANKSGIVING BREAK

UNIT 8 – Yiddish and Zion

Week 15

Sessions 1-2: Yiddish in Israeli History and Culture

- Menachem Ussishkin, "The Language War" (1927)
- Rachel Rojanski, selection from *Yiddish in Israel: A History* (2020)
- *Shtisel* (2013–2018), <https://www.netflix.com/title/81004164> [please watch the first episode, though you are welcome to watch as much as you like!]
- Shayna Weiss, "Shtisel's Ghosts: The Politics of Yiddish in Israeli Popular Culture," *In geveb* (March 2016): <https://ingeveb.org/blog/shtisel-s-ghosts-the-politics-of-yiddish-in-israeli-popular-culture>

CONCLUSIONS AND REVIEW

Week 16

Yiddish Futures

- Yiddishland Pavilion: <https://yiddishlandpavilion.art/>
- Yiddish farm: <https://yiddishfarm.org/>
- Yiddish New York: <https://www.yiddishnewyork.com/> and Klezkanada: <http://klezkanada.org/about>
- Folksbine: <https://nytf.org/>
- YIVO Institute for Yiddish Research: <https://yivo.org/About-YIVO>
- *In geveb, A Journal of Yiddish Studies*: <https://ingeveb.org/blog/introducing-in-geveb-a-journal-of-yiddish-studies>
- Di Rozeve pave: <https://pinkpeacock.gay>
- Summer Yiddish Programs: <https://ingeveb.org/pedagogy/yiddish-in-ale-lender-summer-programs-round-up-2023>
- Yiddishistke: <https://www.instagram.com/yiddishistke/?hl=en>
- Isabel Frey: <https://www.isabelfrey.com/>
- Yiddish Vinkl (Yiddishist in Lviv, Ukraine): https://twitter.com/yiddish_vinkl
- Rad Yiddish: <https://www.facebook.com/RadYiddish>
- Queer Yiddish Camp: <https://www.facebook.com/QueerYiddishCamp>
- Yiddish.Berlin: <https://yiddish.berlin/wp/en/about-2/>
- Maria Ka (Yiddish electropop): <https://mariakamusic.com/listen>

Final Exam: Date TBD

Yiddish 2241: Yiddish Culture
Autumn 2017

Call #20782

Jason Payne

MWF 12:40-1:35

Office: 477 Hagerty Hall

046 Hagerty Hall

Office Hrs: MW 9:30-11:30

payne.9@osu.edu

Office Phone: (614) 266-0773

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Yiddish 2241 is an introductory survey of political, ideological, and religious trends as reflected in Yiddish culture, especially folklore and literature, in both the Old World and the New World. We will begin with an overview of the language and culture of Yiddish, the traditional vernacular of Ashkenazim for over 1,000 years, and the role it played alongside other Jewish languages in creating a distinct way of life for Central and East European Jews. Then we'll begin an overview of key areas of Yiddish cultural activity from the early modern period to the present, exploring Yiddish's role in the creation of a Jewish folk culture and a popular culture mediating between Jewish and non-Jewish cultural expression. Then, since at the turn of the 20th century millions of Yiddish-speaking East European Jews arrived in America, we'll look at the Yiddish literature and culture they produced, giving students some insight into these immigrants' experience and their efforts to find a comfortable, if not safe, space in America.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Mark Zborowski & Elizabeth Herzog, *Life is With People: The Culture of the Shtetl*

Harvey Pekar & Paul Buhle, *Yiddishkeit: Jewish Vernacular & The New Land*

Plus assorted readings on Carmen/Canvas

NB: All texts ordered at SBX, though copies are readily available online as well.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Exams: Students will write two take-home exams, a midterm and a final: the midterm due **16 October**, the final due **8 December**. Exams will consist of several short answer questions and a longer essay question.

Quizzes: Reading assignments must be completed before the class day listed in the syllabus for our first discussion. A weekly short reading quiz will be given before each class meeting on Mondays. If it becomes evident that students are doing the required reading, a daily reading quiz will be given.

Response Papers: Students will write three 1½-2 page single-spaced response papers, the purpose of which is to encourage students to reflect about the course materials, prepare for class discussion, and work through problems related to the course in an informal and unstructured way. They are informal (though still thoughtful) first person accounts of your reactions to and ideas about what we are studying. You can also raise questions (for both/either the class and me), or reflect on lectures and discussions. Papers must demonstrate a solid grasp of the material and an intelligent, considered point.

Those demonstrating neither, or simply regurgitating what has already been said in class discussion, will receive no credit. Students are free to write on whichever texts they choose. Response papers will be due **20 September, 25 October, 20 November**.

Participation: To practice reflective thinking you must take the risk of sharing your perceptions and interpretations and receive feedback from others on their soundness. We construct knowledge and learn from each other, and if you don't speak, others don't learn from you--and vice versa. Students should take notes on reading and come to class prepared for active and voluble discussion. Simply attending class will not garner students any participation points.

Attendance: Students will be allowed two unexcused absences; unexcused absences three and four will lower your final grade by one-third (e.g. B+ to B). The fifth unexcused absence will result in a final grade of E. Documentation must be provided for any excused absence.

No late work will be accepted.

No work may be submitted electronically without prior permission from the instructor.

GRADE PERCENTAGES

Exams... 50%

Response Papers... 25%

Quizzes... 10%

Participation... 15%

PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism is the using of someone else's work as your own and is a serious academic violation that can have disastrous consequences (at a minimum, failing the class). If you have any questions regarding citation or reference, please go to

http://www.cstw.ohiostate.edu/writing_center/handouts/research_plagiarism.htm.

ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term "academic misconduct" includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487).

For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct http://studentlife.osu.edu/pdfs/csc_12-31-07.pdf.

DISABILITY SERVICES

The Office of Disability Services offers a wide variety of legally mandated services to students with documented disabilities. Students with disabilities that have been certified by the Office for Disability Services will be appropriately accommodated and should inform the instructor as soon as possible of their needs. ODS is located in 098 Baker Hall, 113 W. 12th Avenue. Contact them at 292-3307 or at www.ods.ohio-state.edu. Autumn term office hours are M-F 8:00 am to 5 pm.

WRITING CENTER

The Writing Center offers free help at any stage of the writing process for any member of the university community. Autumn hours are M-F 9:30-5:30. Call 688-5865 to schedule an appointment, or drop by 4132 Smith Lab, 174 W. 18th, or do it online at <http://osu.mywconline.com>.

GEC Breadth: C. Arts and Humanities

Goals: Students evaluate significant writing and works of art. Such studies develop capacities for aesthetic and historical response and judgment; interpretation and evaluation; critical listening, reading, seeing, thinking, and writing; and experiencing the arts and reflecting on that experience.

Arts and Humanities Expected Learning Outcomes: 1. Students develop abilities to be informed observers of, or active participants in, the visual, spatial, performing, spoken, or literary arts. 2. Students develop an understanding of the foundations of human beliefs, the nature of reality, and the norms that guide human behavior. 3. Students examine and interpret how the human condition and human values are explored through works of art and humanistic writings.

GEC Breadth: 3. Cultures and Ideas

Cultures and Ideas Expected Learning Outcomes: 1. Students develop abilities to analyze, appreciate, and interpret major forms of human thought and expression. 2. Students develop abilities to understand how ideas influence the character of human beliefs, the perception of reality, and the norms which guide human behavior.

GEC Breadth: 4. Diversity (B). International Issues

Goals: International Issues coursework help students become educated, productive, and principled citizens of their nation in an increasingly globalized world.

International Issues Expected Learning Outcomes: 1. Students exhibit an understanding of some combination of political, economic, cultural, physical, social, and philosophical differences in or among the world's nations, peoples and cultures outside the U.S. 2. Students are able to describe, analyze and critically evaluate the roles of categories such as race, gender, class, ethnicity, national origin and religion as they relate to international/global institutions, issues, cultures and citizenship. 3. Students recognize the role of national and international diversity in shaping their own attitudes and values as global citizens.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week ½ Introduction to class
8/23-8/25 Yiddish language

Week One
8/28-9/1 M-F Yiddish language

Week Two
9/4-9/8 M: Henry Greenbaum, "My Shtetl Gombin" (C)
 W: Joshua Rothenberg, "Demythologizing the Shtetl" (C)
 F: Roskies, "The Shtetl as Imagined Community" (C)

Week Three

9/11-9/15 M: Klier, "What Exactly was a Shtetl?" (C)
W: Zborowski & Herzog, 29-48
F: Zborowski & Herzog, 49-68

Week Four

9/18-9/22 M: Yohanan Petrovsky-Shtern, from *The Golden Age of the Shtetl* (C)
W: Zborowski & Herzog, 381-393
F: Zborowski & Herzog, 393-405

Week Five

9/25-9/29 M: Ansky, from *The Enemy at His Pleasure* (C); Z & H, 71-87
W: Shternshis, "Soviet and Kosher in the Ukrainian Shtetl" (C); Z & H, 88-104
F: Veidlinger, from "In the Shadow of the Shtetl" (C); Z & H, 105-123

Week Six

10/2-10/6 M: Gesen, from *Where the Jews Aren't: The Sad and Absurd Story of Birobidzhan* (C)
W: Isaac Bashevis Singer, "Short Friday"; Z & H, 124-141
F: Y.L. Peretz, "Bontsye Shvayg"; Z & H, 142-165

Week Seven

10/9-10/13 M: Lecture—Litvak Yiddish Culture; Z & H, 166-188
W: Lecture—Litvak Yiddish Culture
F: NO CLASS—AUTUMN BREAK

Week Eight

10/16-10/20 M: Pekar & Buhle, 17-39
W: Pekar & Buhle, 40-66
F: Pekar & Buhle, 67-85

Week Nine

10/23-10/27 M: Pekar & Buhle, 86-102; Z & H, 191-213
W: Pekar & Buhle, 103-119; Z & H, 214-238
F: Pekar & Buhle, 120-135; Z & H, 239-265

Week Ten

10/30-11/3 M: Pekar & Buhle, 136-150; Z & H, 269-290
W: Pekar & Buhle, 151-165; Z & H, 291-307
F: Pekar & Buhle, 166-178; Z & H, 308-329

Week Eleven

11/6-11/10 M: Pekar & Buhle, 179-191; Z & H, 330-360
W: Pekar & Buhle, 192-202; Z & H, 361-380
F: NO CLASS—VETERAN'S DAY

Week Twelve

11/13-11/17 M: Pekar & Buhle, 203-213; Z & H, 409-430
W: Pekar & Buhle, 214-224

F: Pekar & Buhle, 225-232

Week Thirteen

11/20-11/24 M: Kijak, "Immigrants Mourning for a World Lost" (C)
W: NO CLASS—THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY
F: NO CLASS—THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY

Week Fourteen

11/27-12/1 M: Wex, "As the Cholent Cooks" & "Fat of the Land" (C)
W: Wex, "It's All Meat" & "Mother of Us All" (C)
F: Lecture: Yiddish Music

Week Fifteen

12/4-12/8 M: Lecture: Yiddish Film
W: Lecture: Yiddish Film

NB: This reading schedule is extraordinarily tentative and is contingent upon the availability of texts, the instructor's whimsical nature, the mood of the proletariat and its skill at negotiation. Ditto the films.

GE Theme Course Submission Worksheet: Traditions, Cultures, & Transformations

Yiddish / Jewish Studies 3241: Yiddish Culture

Autumn 2026

germanic.osu.edu / nesa.osu.edu

GEN Theme: Traditions, Cultures, and Transformations

Course Overview

Instructor: Saul Zaritt

Email address: zaritt.1@osu.edu

Office: Hagerty 421

Office hours: by appointment

germanic.osu.edu

Course Description

A bastardized German, a jargon, a woman's vernacular, an old-world language, a dying tongue, a Hasidic language, a queer language, a radical language—these are just a few of the ways that Yiddish has been labeled over its one-thousand-year history. This course will trace the shifting images attached to the language of Eastern European Jewry, from its early modern beginnings as a tool for translating between Jewish and non-Jewish cultures to its contemporary status as a language of mourning and nostalgia, Jewish American humor, Hasidic isolation, and Jewish radicalism. Through poetry, fiction, essays, and film, we will discover what this language can tell us about modern Jewish culture and what we might learn along the way about diaspora and migrant cultures more generally. All texts will be read in translation.

How this course connects to or exemplifies the concept of this Theme (Traditions, Cultures & Transformations)

This course examines Yiddish culture and society from the early modern period to the present via a close analysis of historical texts alongside contemporary media—in Yiddish, in translation, and as language integrated into other cultures. This roughly thousand-year history spans the many upheavals and paradigm shifts of the modern world, from the introduction of the printing press to the contemporary development of online language learning and its impact of minor language revivals. Yiddish is a language whose history touches on some of the central challenges of modernity, and the study of its vast and varied archives will give students the opportunity to reflect on the powers of language and cultural change.

How this course meets the Goals and ELOs shared by all Themes

Theme courses represent in-depth exploration of a topic while exposing students to new research and methodologies. This course provides students with the tools to explore the newest approaches to the history of Yiddish culture, up to and including the contemporary moment. Appropriate secondary readings and short lectures that will provide all students with background to engage with class material. Readings each week present students with critical perspectives on the language while assignments enable them to internalize and synthesize this information as they seek to create their own histories of the language.

The central assignment of the course is each student's creation of their own "Yiddish dictionary." Students collect words and concepts that we encounter throughout the semester, some that we come across once or others that recur throughout the semester. Each dictionary entry must include not only a definition of this term but also a series of examples of how the word is used or how it appears in Yiddish history, and toward what shifting purposes. This allows students to focus on the material they find the most engaging about the course in a way that unites disparate parts of the syllabus. There is also opportunity to bring in material from outside the course syllabus, as they expand entries to include their own research as related to each chosen word. This assignment allows them to take ownership over the tradition that they are encountering, as well as organize material in a way that sparks their interest.

The concept of the dictionary is also important for the class as we think critically about what a language is, how it works, and how cultures converge and change over time. The word "chutzpah" for instance has a long history, from its Hebrew biblical origins to its use today as part of self-help rhetorics. The word cannot just be defined as "nerve" or "audacity"—it requires students to explore multiple iterations of the word in different cultural and historical contexts and observing that the various uses of the word may not in fact be compatible!

The project, along with the regular quizzes, also provide opportunity for self-reflection. Since the dictionary is a semester-long project students will see how their knowledge of and about Yiddish will change over time, as their definitions and entries grow and change as we together encounter more material and explore different approaches. The regular quizzes ask students to ask questions rather than always provide answers, a process that reinforces critical thinking. Later quizzes will ask students to answer their own or peers' questions—a process that gives students the opportunity to reflect on their own learning process.

Goals and ELOs unique to Traditions, Cultures & Transformations

This course explores many of the goals associated with Traditions, Cultures, and Transformations. The course follows the thousand-year history of Yiddish, from its cross-cultural beginnings (adaptations of Italian chivalric epics in the 16th century) to its emergence in the nineteenth century as the language of Yiddish socialism and Jewish diaspora nationalism, from a language of daily women's prayer in the nineteenth century to the language of post-Holocaust mourning. The course follows the way the language has been used in different religious settings, in particular in the Hasidic world, and then as a language of folklore, both in small-town Eastern Europe and as a foundational component of Jewish American humor. The course explores the relationship between Yiddish and its surrounding languages and cultures, in particular as a minor

language and a language of migration. The course also spends a lot of time working on the consequences of institution-building, from the rise of Yiddish print culture in the nineteenth century to the establishment of contemporary organizations devoted to the promotion of the Yiddish language.

Following these trends requires a flexible course structure that moves thematically, each unit retreading the long history of the language from a different angle: translation and cross-cultural contact, gender, politics, religion, popular culture, and the contemporary moment. Quizzes for each unit will allow students to explore questions that linger after their reading and class discussion while demonstrating their ability to synthesize class material.

The course examines how these various aspects of Yiddish persist throughout its history, confronting how its cross-cultural aspects—its capacity to bridge between Jewish and non-Jewish worlds, its status as a language of migration, the perception that Yiddish is a “woman’s” language—present varying models for how to navigate difference in our global society.