

# **Jewish Folklore**

## **Fall 2018**

**TTh 12:30 to 2:00 PM**  
**GDC 5.304**

GSD #38025                      ANT 325L #31750  
JS 363    #39600                      RS 357 #43290  
REE    #43910

\*Writing flag

\*Global Cultures

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### **Course Description**

Dybbuks, golems, evil eye are just some of the more well-known aspects of Jewish folklore, but this course will also examine the folklife of the Jews, their world view, their folk beliefs and fears. Call it folk religion if you will; many of these practices were dismissed by the "official" Jewish religion as unJewish, but the "folk" persisted and eventually the practices became Judaized and accepted. We will look at the folklore of East European Jews as well as of Middle Eastern Jews and their development in the United States with immigration.

Using literary sources, ethnographic memoirs, historical documents, films (among them "The Dybbuk" 1939), folklore collections and field trips (among them - to the oldest Austin Jewish cemetery), we will focus on what makes Jewish folklore Jewish. Among the folklore genres to be examined -folktale, legend, folksong, folk music, custom, belief and

of course, Jewish humor. By the end of the class the student will better grasp what is meant by folklore in general and Jewish folklore in particular and how to compare the traditions of cultures.

### **Grading Policy**

Attendance and class participation 20%

3 short papers 2 – 3 pages 30%

Longer final paper on subject of your choice 50%

First short paper: an interview with a Jewish senior on folklore.

Second short paper on development of a Jewish custom

Third short paper: on Jewish humor

The first two short papers will be in two stages; first a draft to be worked on and commented on by instructor and fellow students. Then a final version.

Required texts:

*The Bible*

*Jewish Magic and Superstition* by Joshua Trachtenberg

*The Lifetime of the Jew* by Hayyim Schauss

*The Jewish Festivals* by Hayyim Schauss

*Recommended: Great Tales of Jewish Fantasy and Occult* by Joachim Neugroschel

On reserve in PCL – *Jewish Folklore: An Annotated Bibliography* Eli Yassif

\*7) On-line reference at UT-library – *Encyclopedia of Jewish Folklore and Traditions*

<http://site.ebrary.com/lib/utexas/detail.action?docID=10674760>

\*8) Jewish Encyclopedia on line (1906)

<http://jewishencyclopedia.com/>

9) YIVO Encyclopedia on line <http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/>

Weekly assignments.

## **Thursday August 31**

### **Definitions**

What is Folklore?

What's Jewish about Jewish Folklore?

In class video: “Gefilte Fish”.

## **Tuesday Sept. 4**

### **Jewish Folk Narrative – Bible/Midrash**

Read: All of “Genesis” in Bible

Read: “Midrash” entry in *Jewish Encyclopedia* 1906.

Read: “Eve” in *Encyclopedia of Jewish Folklore and Traditions*

Begin to find a senior to interview for first paper.

## **Thursday Sept. 6**

### **Rosh-Hashonah: Jewish New Year.**

Read: entry “Rosh Ha Shana” in *Encyclopedia of Jewish Folklore and Traditions*

Read: “New Year” in *Jewish Encyclopedia* 1906.

Read: “New Year/Rosh-Hashonah” in Schauss *The Jewish Festivals*.

## **Tuesday Sept 11**

### **The oral tradition in the Medieval Period**

Read: On Canvas “Jewish Folk Literature pages 171 – 192. The development of “midrash”. Handout from *Tsene-Rene: the Woman’s Bible*

### **Classic Jewish Legend: The Ten Lost Tribes**

Read: On Canvas: Abraham Gross “The Expulsion and the Search for the Ten Lost Tribes”.

**Thursday Sept. 13**

**Classic Jewish Legends**

Read on Canvas:: “The Story of the Jerusalemite”, “The Enduring Legend of the Jewish Pope”

**Tuesday Sept. 18**

**Yom-Kippur: The holiest day of the Jewish Calendar**

Read: “Shofar” and “Yom-kippur” in *Jewish Encyclopedia* 1906. And in *in Encyclopedia of Jewish Folklore and Traditions*

*Read: “Yom-kippur” in Schauss Jewish Festivals*

**Thursday Sept. 20**

**The Golem: “Jewish Frankenstein”**

See before class:

German expressionist silent film on Youtube - "Golem 1920" in Canvas , article “Golem! The Making of a Modern Myth”.

**First short paper – interview- is due.**

**Tuesday Sept. 25**

**Sukkoth Festival**

Read: Sukkoth” in Schauss *Jewish Festivals*, *Jewish Encyclopedia*, and *Encyclopedia of Jewish Folklore*.

**Thursday Sept. 27**

**Class to be held in Sukkah**

Field trip to Sukkah in UT-Hillel. Meet there.

**Tuesday Oct 2**

Discussion of interviews and papers looked at in class.

Folklore in life history, storytelling.

Final draft of 1<sup>st</sup> short paper is due.

**Thursday Oct. 4**

**Jewish Folktales**

What is a folktale? How do scholars analyze folktales.

Read on Canvas: "Tale-types and Motifs"

Read: (Handout) Four tales from *Great Tales of Jewish Occult and Fantasy*: "The Rabbi Who Was Turned into a Werewolf" "Conversation of Two Ghosts" "King Solomon and Asmedai" "Haninah and the Frog".

**Tuesday, Oct 9**

**Themes in Jewish Folklore: Messianism**

Canvas: “Messiah Ben Joseph in the Babylonian Talmud”. “Messiah” in *Encyclopedia of Jewish Folklore* and *Jewish Encyclopedia*

Hand in topic for paper on Jewish custom

**Thursday, Oct 11,**

**Messianism continued: In Jewish Custom**

Canvas: “Apocalyptic Messianism”.

**Tuesday, Oct 16**

**Themes in Jewish Folklore: Mysticism/Kabbalah**

Read: *Jewish Magic and Superstition* pages 1 – 104

Handout: Introduction to main Kabbalah concepts.

**Thursday Oct 18**

**Mysticism/Kabbalah part 2**

Read: *Jewish Magic and Superstition* 105 – 208

2<sup>ND</sup> short paper – Jewish custom – is due

**Tuesday Oct. 23**

**Jewish Mysticism/Magic**

Read: Jewish Magic and Superstition 209 – 268

## **Thursday Oct 25**

### **Jewish Amulets**

Read Amulets in *Jewish Encyclopedia*, and *Encyclopedia of Jewish Folklore*

Choose topic for 2<sup>nd</sup> paper on Jewish Humor

Analysis of Jewish humor; each student will look at a collection of Jewish jokes or a comedian

## **Tuesday Oct 30**

### **Evil Eye**

Canvas articles: “The Jewish Evil Eye”

Final draft of final short paper due.

## **Thursday Nov. 1 Jewish Humor**

In Canvas: articles on Jewish Humor

Choose a topic for Jewish humor.



**Tuesday Nov. 6**

**Jewish Life Cycle: Birth**

Read: Schauss *The Lifetime of a Jew* pages 1 – 76

In Canvas: articles on naming

**Thursday Nov. 8**

**Jewish Life Cycle Marriage**

Read Schauss: pages 77 – 219

3<sup>rd</sup> short paper is due on Jewish Humor.

**Tuesday Nov. 13**

**Jewish Life Cycle: Death and Burial**

Read: Schauss: 220 - 300

**Thursday Nov. 15**

**Folk Art and Material Culture**

Canvas articles on gravestones, paper cuts, ritual objects.

Topic for final long paper due.

**Tuesday Nov 20**

Visit to Austin Jewish Cemetery

**Thursday Nov 22<sup>th</sup> Thanksgiving NO CLASS**

**Tuesday Nov. 27**

**Folk Traditions revived: Klezmer music**

Read: Canvas articles on Klezmer revival.

Klezmer Music Film: “Dancing in the Garden of Eden”

In class visit from Klezmer musician.

**Thursday Nov. 29**

**Presentation discussion of research on final papers..**

**Tuesday Dec. 4 The Holiday of Hannukah**

Read: “Hanukkah” in *Encyclopedia of Jewish Folklore*

“Hanukkah” and “Games” in *Jewish Encyclopedia*

“Hannukah” in Schauss *Jewish Feasts*

**Thursday Dec. 6<sup>th</sup>**

**Jewish folk games – dreidl, nuts etc.**

**Final Papers Due Friday Dec. 14 midnight.**

Students with disabilities may request appropriate academic accommodations from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement,

Services for Students with Disabilities, 512-471-6259,

<http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd>