



# American Jews and the Media

563:306:01 (Jewish Studies)

050:301:03 (American Studies); 195:395:03 (Comparative Literature)

Rutgers University, Fall 2007

Wednesday, 9:50 AM - 12:50 PM

ROOM: Murray 210

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Office Hours: Wednesday 2:00-3:00 PM and by appointment

## Course description:

This course examines the wide range of interactions that American Jews have had with sound recordings, film, radio, television, video, and the internet over the course of the twentieth century. While some attention is placed not on feature films, popular television series, and other significant works of American media by or about Jews, the focus of the course is on the social practices in which all these media have figured in American Jewish life from the period of East European Jews' mass emigration to America at the beginning of the century (e.g., early sound recordings, early silent film) to the present (especially the use of videos and the internet in transforming traditional Jewish community life). Special attention is placed on the use of new media for self-portraiture, spirituality, and collective memory.

## Course requirements:

1. Attendance, preparation for, and active participation in all sessions. Students are required to prepare for in-class discussion all assigned readings and screenings/listening selections in advance of each session. Regular attendance of class and active participation in class discussion is required. Students are expected to come to class on time, having

prepared the reading or other assignment due that day, with comments, questions, etc., regarding the assigned material; to respect the protocols of classroom conduct (e.g., arriving promptly, turning off cell phones, not eating during class, avoiding distracting chatter); to check their email regularly for class announcements (e.g., changes in schedule or assignments); and to turn in written work on the dates due. Students with two unexcused absences will have their course grade reduced by one full grade (e.g., from A to B). Students with four or more unexcused absences will receive an F for the course. Students should be prepared to provide the professor with documentation of excusable absences, such as family emergencies, illness, or religious observance; these must be submitted by the due date for the final exam. *Students who find that they are unable to attend class regularly for some pressing reason should notify their dean as well as the professor as soon as possible.*

**A note on media reserves:**

All prescreening/prelistening materials are placed on reserve in the Music/Media lab of the Music Library, located in the lower level of the Douglass campus library. Materials must be used on site. For hours and more information, call the Music Library at 732-932-9783 or visit [http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/rul/libs/music\\_lib/music\\_lib.shtml](http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/rul/libs/music_lib/music_lib.shtml)

2. Write **five** out of **eleven** response papers, each 2 double-spaced pages (i.e., 1,000-1,200 words), on the reading and/or media work to be prepared for each class. Students choose which of the other six papers they wish to write. Guidelines for papers will be distributed at least one week before they are due.

3. Attend **one** of the screenings at the Rutgers Jewish Film Festival (4-11 November) and write a 4-page (2,000 - 2,5000 words) response to the film and its discussion at the film festival. Guidelines for this assignment, including schedule of films and transportation information, will be distributed in advance of the film festival.

Papers are to be turned in at the beginning of each class; late papers will be penalized, unless there is a compelling reason (e.g., illness) for lateness. All written assignments must be submitted in “hard copy” (i.e., a paper print-out) by the date due. Texts should be double-spaced and stapled together, and with the student’s name and page number on the header of all pages, if possible. Email submissions of class assignments will not be accepted without advance permission from the professor, and then only in extraordinary cases (such as illness). Students choose which eight of the ten assigned papers they wish to write. At the end of the semester, students should collect graded writing assignments and submit them along with the final exam.

4. Final examination: Essay questions related to course readings, media works watched/listened to both outside of class and in class, and class discussions. Details to be announced.

All written work that a student submits must be his/her own independent effort. Students must cite properly all outside sources (readings, media works, websites, etc.) consulted in preparing written assignments. Students should review the university policy on Academic Integrity: (<http://ctaar.rutgers.edu/integrity/policy.html>). Failure to comply with this policy can result in failure of the course or more severe penalties.

Course grade will be based on class attendance and participation (20%), response papers (35%), film festival paper (15%), and final exam (30%).

**NOTE:** Course schedule is subject to change. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to check with the professor regarding any changes in assignments, etc.  
**American Jews and the Media, Fall 2007**

### Course Readings

# = book to be purchased at Rutgers University Bookstore. These books are also on reserve in Alexander Library (College Ave. Campus). Other readings, except where noted, are available online at sakai: (<https://sakai.rutgers.edu/portal>).

- Boyarin, Jonathan. 1994. "Jewish Geography Goes On-Line." *Jewish Folklore and Ethnology Review* 16:1, pp. 3-5.
- Citron, Michelle. 1999. *Home Movies and Other Necessary Fictions*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, pp. 2-25.
- Ginsburg, Faye. 1988. "The Parallax Effect: Jewish Ethnographic Film." *Jewish Folklore and Ethnology Review* 10:1, pp. 16-17.
- # Hoberman, J., and Jeffrey Shandler. 2003. *Entertaining America: Jews, Movies and Broadcasting*. Princeton University Press. ("EA" on syllabus)
- Katz, John Stuart. 1978. "Autobiographical Film." In *Autobiography: Film/Video/Photography*, ed. John Stuart Katz. Art Galler of Ontario. pp. 10-15.
- Kligman, Mark. 1994. "The Medium and the Message: The Recorded Music of Brooklyn's Orthodox Jews," *Jewish Folklore and Ethnology Review* 16:1, pp. 9-11.
- Koven, Mikel J. 1999. "'You Don't Have To Be Filmish:' The Toronto Jewish Film Festival." *Ethnologies* 21:1. pp. 115-132.
- London, Frank. 1998. "An Insider's View: How We Traveled from Obscurity to the Klezmer Establishment in Twenty Years." *Judaism* 185 (47:1), pp. 40-43.
- Portnoy, Edward. 2004. "Haredim and the Internet." *Modiya: Jews/Media/Religion*. <http://modiya.nyu.edu/handle/1964/265> (not on sakai)
- Raphaelson, Samson. 1924. "The Day of Atonement." In *The Jazz Singer*, ed. Robert L. Carringer. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1979, pp. 147-167.
- Ruby, Jay. 1978. "The Celluloid Self." In *Autobiography: Film/Video/Photography*, ed. John Stuart Katz. Art Galler of Ontario. pp. 7-9.
- Rudenberg, Lucia. 1994. "Jewish Resources in Computer Networking." *Jewish Folklore and Ethnology Review* 16:1, pp. 12-18.
- Sacks, Maury. 1989. "Computing Community at Purim," *Journal of American Folklore* 102: 405 (July-September), pp. 275-291.
- Sapoznik, Henry. 1987. *The Compleat Klezmer*. Cedarhurst, N.Y.: Tara Publications, pp. 5-18.
- # Shandler, Jeffrey. 1999. *While America Watches: Televising the Holocaust*. New York: Oxford University Press.

- Shandler, Jeffrey, and Elihu Katz. 1997. "Broadcasting American Judaism: The Radio and Television Department of the Jewish Theological Seminary." In *Tradition Renewed: A History of the Jewish Theological Seminary*, ed. Jack Wertheimer. New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, pp. 363-401.
- Shandler, Jeffrey, and Aviva Weintraub. 2007. "'Santa, Shmanta': Greeting Cards for the December Dilemma." *Material Religion*. pp. TBA.
- Slobin, Mark. 1984. "The Neo-Klezmer Movement and Euro-American Musical Revivalism." *Journal of American Folklore* 97:383, pp. 98-104.
- Zimmerman, Patricia R. 1995. *Reel Families: A Social History of Amateur Film*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, pp. 56-89.

### Class Schedule

Date/Session	Reading and <i>Prescreening/Prelistening*</i>	In-class screening/ listening (excerpts)
<u>9/5</u> Introduction	--	Obsessed with Jews
<u>9/12</u> Klezmer and its revival recordings,  House	London, Sapoznik, Slobin  <i>Klezmer Music: A Marriage of Heaven and Earth*</i>	selected klezmer  In the Fiddler's
<u>9/19</u> Immigrant entertainments Jewess, <b>RESPONSE PAPER #1 DUE</b>	EA** 15-33  <i>Cohen's Fire Sale*</i>	Romance of a  The Yiddisher Boy, His People
<u>9/26</u> The Jazz Singer Story, <b>RESPONSE PAPER #2 DUE</b> remakes,	EA 76-92,  Raphaelson  <i>Jazz Singer (1927)*</i>	The Al Jolson  'Jazz Singer'  Overture to Glory
<u>10/3</u> Yiddish film and radio <b>RESPONSE PAPER #3 DUE</b> Green Fields;  Yiddish	EA 101-112  <i>Americaner Schadchen*</i>	His Wife's Lover, Uncle Moses,  selections from  broadcasts
<u>10/10</u> Hollywood and anti-Semitism Great Dictator <b>RESPONSE PAPER #4 DUE</b>	EA 45-75  <i>Gentleman's Agreement*</i>	Crossfire, The
<u>10/17</u> Ecumenical broadcasting A Time for Valor <b>RESPONSE PAPER #5 DUE</b>	Shandler & Katz  <i>www.ajcarchives.org (selections TBA)</i>	The Eternal Light,

\* These prescreening/Prelistening materials (listed in *italics*) are on reserve in the Music Library located in the lower level of the Douglass Library. These materials must be used on site.

\*\*EA = Hoberman and Shandler, *Entertaining America*.

Date/Session	Reading and <i>Prescreening/Prelistening</i>	In-class screening/ listening (excerpts)
<u>10/24</u> Documentaries: Personal/Political filmmaker, <b>RESPONSE PAPER #6 DUE</b>	Ginsburg, Katz, Ruby <i>States of Unbelonging*</i>	work by guest Lynne Sachs
<u>10/31</u> Home Movies films, <b>RESPONSE PAPER #7 DUE</b> Business,	Citron, Zimmermann <i>Family Album*</i>	selected amateur Nobody's Huppah in the Sukkah
<u>11/7</u> Media and piety videos <b>RESPONSE PAPER #8 DUE</b>	EA 264-267, Kligman, Sacks <i>Shake off the Dust: Arise*</i>	selected Chabad <i>A gesheft</i>
<u>11/14</u> Film festivals <b>FILM FESTIVAL PAPER DUE</b>	Koven <i>Attend a screening at the Rutgers Jewish Film Festival, 4-11 November (details TBA)</i>	--
<u>11/21</u> THANKSGIVING SCHEDULE: NO CLASS THIS WEEK		
<u>11/28</u> Holocaust TV <b>RESPONSE PAPER #9 DUE</b> Postscript,	Shandler (Chs. 2,5,6,8) <i>Patterns of Force*</i>	This Is Your Life, Holocaust: A While America Watched
<u>12/5</u> December Dilemma South Park, <b>RESPONSE PAPER #10 DUE</b> the Jews	Shandler and Weintraub <i>thirtysomething*</i>	A Time for Valor, Christmastime for
<u>12/12</u> Internet in Jewish life <b>RESPONSE PAPER #11 DUE</b>	Boyarin, Portnoy, Ruedenberg <i>TBA</i>	--