

JST 3930; LIT 4930

Jews in Film

Spring 2026

Instructor: Professor Dragan Kujundzic

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Tuesday, 10 (5:10 PM – 6:00 PM)

Thursday, 10-11 (5:10 – 7:05 PM)

Office Hours by Appointment

The course will introduce students to the rich history of Jewish cinema and the latest critical and theoretical literature about it. Particular attention will be paid to the ways cinema constructs the figure of the Jew in terms of gender, race, politics or citizenship (Israel). It will be organized thematically, and chronologically, starting with the topics of Jewish Diaspora, emigration to the US and integration, the first sound film, and then films about the Holocaust, comedy, Israeli Cinema. During the course, we will screen and discuss films involved with the representation of the Jews (not necessarily made by Jewish American cineastes like Charlie Chaplin's *The Great Dictator* and *Inglorious Basterds* by Quentin Tarantino) and those of course made by prominent Jewish American filmmakers. The course will cover the screening and discussion of classics such as *Fiddler on the Roof*, or Barbara Streisand's *Yentl* (together with reading the novel by Sholem Aleichem and the story by Isaac Bashevis Singer on which each film was respectively based); the extensive analysis of the first sound movie, *The Jazz Singer* with Al Jolson, including critical and theoretical responses by Irvin Howe and Susan Gubar; *Schindler's List* by Steven Spielberg and *The Pianist* by Roman Polanski. Jewish humor in cinema will be discussed (Billy Wilder, *Some Like It Hot*; and Mel Brooks—*The Producers*, *Blazing Saddles*). Special attention will be dedicated to women filmmakers, such as Barbara Streisand, Susan Seidelman, and Amie Heckerling. The course will conclude with the Coen Brothers' film *Serious Men*. This list is not exhaustive, and may change during the course to include, for example, documentaries about Israeli cinema or filmmakers' biographies. **The course will also make use of the Jewish Film Festival organized by the Center for Jewish Studies during the Fall (the program will be distributed) and require students to screen and discuss the current International Jewish Film Production (at least 50% of films required to screen, group and individual tasks and presentations TBA in class). UF Health and Honor's Code will be observed.**

14th Annual Gainesville

Jewish Film Festival

All Films at The Hippodrome Cinema
25 SE 2nd Place, Gainesville, FL 32601

(unless otherwise noted)

All Screenings at 7:00 PM

(unless otherwise noted)

Learning goals: the students will learn to think critically about the seminal films of Jewish, Israeli and Jewish-American Cinema, and essays about them.

Students will be expected to write short summaries of each film screened, which will count towards their class attendance and homework (10%) and group presentation participation (40% of the grade). There will be a mid-term (25%) and a final paper (25%). Collective class presentations will be assigned, to include reports from Jewish Film Festival. Attendance is obligatory. The Honors Code and the Flu/Covid Policy of the University of Florida will be observed. The syllabus is not final, and may be changed during the course of the semester according to the needs of the class and the benefit of the students. Any changes will be sent duly ahead of time in writing via the class listserve and or canvas.

Please consult your UF email regularly as well as Canvas for announcements about the class and class assignments. Course material will be distributed via listserve and or canvas.

The class will also on occasion meet via ZOOM, to be announced on Canvas and via listserve. Please plan to attend all meetings and screenings. Two absences during the semester are allowed without excuse. Other absences will require written excuse such as a doctor's note.

Tuesday, 10 (5:10 PM – 6:00 PM), marked as 1
Thursday, 10-11 (5:10 – 7:05 PM), marked as 2

Week one

1 Introduction, *The Tribe*. Tevye the Milkman (*Library of Yiddish Classics Edition*) by Sholem Aleichem, text provided by instructor. *Fiddler on the Roof*, Screen, Amazon.

2 Continue Introduction, *Tevye the Milkman (Library of Yiddish Classics Edition)* by Sholem Aleichem, texts, essays provided by instructor. *Fiddler on the Roof*, Screen, Amazon.

Week two

1 Screen: *Laughing in Darkness*, Library UF, also YouTube.

2 Discussion, Instructor's lecture and collective participation.

Week three

1 Instructors lecture, continue: *Fiddler on the Roof*, *Laughing in Darkness*

2 *First presentation, Group One. Fiddler on the Roof, Laughing in Darkness*
Screen: Barbra Streisand, *Yentl*; Read Isaac Bashevis Singer, *Yentl*;

Week four

1 Barbra Streisand, *Yentl*; Read Isaac Bashevis Singer, *Yentl*; **Screen:** *Yentl* (available on various platforms)

Screen: *Isaac in America*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YPDowgxqqjA>

Read: *Yentl* by Isaac Bashevis Singer (handout)

2 Second group presentation, Group 2. Barbara Streisand, Singer, *Yentl*.

Instructor's lecture: Chaplin, *Great Dictator*

Week five

1 Instructor's lecture, Uri, *Rabbi Jacob*; Silver, *Hester Street*; Coen Brothers, *Serious Man*; *The Big Lebowski*; Chaplin, *Great Dictator*

2 Third group presentation, Group 3, Chaplin, *Great Dictator*

Introduction, Screen in class: Tarantino, *Inglorious Basterds*

Week six

1 Finish Screening, Discussion: Tarantino.

2 Fourth group presentation, Group 4. Tarantino; Instructor's introduction to the festival.

Week seven

Class meets at the Festival, all week, OR TBD in classroom make up screening and discussion

Week eight

Class meets at the Festival, all week, OR TBD in classroom make up screening and discussion

Week nine

Class meets at the Festival, all week, OR TBD in classroom make up screening and discussion

Week ten

SPRING BREAK

Week eleven

1 *Festival Screening Reports*

2 *Midterm presentations, individual and group.*

MIDTERM DUE ONLINE

Week Twelve

1 Public lecture, TBA, and Introduction, Start Screening in class: *Between the Temples*

2 Screen, finish, discuss: Nathan Silver, *Between the Temples*

Week thirteen

1 Screen and discuss: Woody Allen: *Annie Hall*, excerpt; *New York Story*, excerpt

2 Concluding remarks, Woody Allen

Week fourteen

1 Presentation: *Group (1-2) and individual presentations on the topic of Jews in Film*

2 Presentation: *Group (3-4) and individual presentations on the topic of Jews in Film*

Week fifteen

1 Concluding remarks, **Final paper due online**