

**Charles University, Faculty of Arts
East and Central European Studies**

Summer 2016

Jewish Images in Central European Cinema

CUFA F 380

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Office Hours: by appointment
Classes: Mon + Tue, 12.00 – 3.15, Wed 12.00 – 2.45, H201 (Hybernská 3, Prague 1)

Course Description

This course examines the portrayal of Jews and Jewish themes in the cinemas of Central Europe from the 1920s until the present. It considers not only depictions of Jews made by gentiles (sometimes with anti-Semitic undertones), but also looks at productions made by Jewish filmmakers aimed at a primarily Jewish audience. The selection of films is representative of the broader region where Czech, Slovak, Polish, Hungarian, Ruthenian, Ukrainian, German, and Yiddish are (or were historically) spoken. Although attention will be given to the national-political context in which the films were made, most of the films by their very nature defy easy classification according to strict categories of statehood—this is particularly true for the pre-World War II Yiddish-language films. For this reason, the films will also be examined with an eye toward broader, transnational connections and global networks of people and ideas. Primary emphasis will be placed on two areas: (1) films that depict and document pre-Holocaust Jewish society in Central Europe, and (2) post-War films that seek to come to terms with the Holocaust and the nearly absolute destruction of Jewish culture and tradition in the region. Weekly film screenings will be supplemented by theoretical readings related to the films or to concepts associated with them. In addition to close examinations of the film scheduled for each week, class sessions will include viewing and discussion of clips from other, related films. Discussion will touch on issues of ethnic representation, agency, and memory.

Course Goals and Student Learning Objectives

By the end of the course, the student will be familiar with the basic trends in the depiction of Jews in Central European cinema over the past one hundred years. She will have a general understanding of the regional cinema culture between the two World Wars and the significant contributions of Jewish filmmakers. Most significantly in this regard, the student will become acquainted with the highly developed and far-reaching Yiddish film industry in the pre-World War II era. In addition, she will gain an understanding of the main issues at stake in memorializing the Holocaust and some of the leading strategies that Central European filmmakers adopted in coming to terms with this episode in the national and regional history. Finally, the student will possess the skills to discuss and analyze specific films, not only in aesthetic terms (i.e. form and content), but also in terms of their cultural and historical context (i.e. as “cultural artifacts”).

Required Readings and Screenings

There will be one or two short articles (on average) to read for each class session. All readings will be made available in the course reader.

Each week there will be two required film screenings occurring outside of class. If a required screening is missed for any reason, it is the student's responsibility to view the film on their own.

Recommended Readings

The reader will also include several recommended readings for those seeking more information on a particular topic.

In addition, for those who have not previously taken any courses in cinema studies, I recommend a look at any of the following books for an introduction to film analysis:

- Timothy Corrigan and Patricia White, *The Film Experience: An Introduction*;
- James Monaco, *How to Read a Film*;
- David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, *Film Art*;
- Louis D. Giannetti, *Understanding Movies*.

Grading Policy

Grades based on letters A through F will be given according to the following breakdown:

Attendance and participation	20%
Weekly "mini assignments"	25%
Midterm exam	25%
Final paper	30%

Classroom Procedures

Attendance

Regular and punctual class attendance is mandatory for all students. Absence of 180 minutes is allowed. Three or more absences (90 minutes each) lower the grade automatically (A to A-, A to B+ in case of 4 absences etc.). Students must attend at least 70 % of the course. If a student attends less than 70 % of the class meetings, he or she will receive the final grade 'F' on their transcript.

Presentation Policy: Missing the presentation will result in an F (when applicable). If the student wants to switch the date, he/she must find someone to do it and both students must confirm the change in e-mails to the professor at least 10 days in advance. If the student is sick and has a medical note, then the professor must agree with the student on how the work will be made up for.

You should arrive to class **on time** and with **cell phones OFF**. Arriving to class more than 10 minutes late will count as a half absence for that day.

Unless you have an official, documented excuse, assignments are due at the time and date stated on the assignment sheet. **I grant extensions ONLY in cases of extreme circumstance.** Late work will be marked down by one-third of a letter grade for each day it is late.

Final Test or Paper Policy: Completing the final test or paper is required. Failure to submit the final test or paper according to the deadline will result in a letter grade F for the entire course.

For further details, please see the Attendance Policy at the ECES website under “Academic Policies and Procedures”: <http://eces.ff.cuni.cz/>.

Participation

A large part of this class is designed to promote discussion and the exchange of ideas. In order to effectively participate in classroom discussion, you are expected to have seen the films, read all related texts, and taken comprehensive notes on both prior to coming to class each day.

Remember that “talking” is not the same as “participation.” Effective class participation demonstrates not only that you have seen the films and thoroughly read and understood (or grappled with) the ideas in the texts, it also engages others, extends our understanding, builds upon what others have said or written, and illustrates critical thinking and personal reflection.

The success of a class such as this relies on the engagement and enthusiasm of **all** students as we discuss the films and the texts. In small group and class discussions, students should be prepared to contribute and share their ideas, questions, and opinions on a daily basis. *Listening attentively* to others is also an important part of effective class participation.

Assignments

Written film responses

After each film screening, you will be expected to write and submit a brief text in response to specific prompts or questions that I will provide to you prior to the screening. The purpose of this exercise is to focus your attention of specific aspects of the films that will be important for class discussion and for you to practice formulating and organizing your thoughts with respect to the films and the readings. **The responses will be due before class on the day that the film is scheduled for classroom discussion (typically Mondays and Wednesdays).**

For full credit, these responses do not need to be lengthy, but they do need to demonstrate a certain degree of analytical thought. Although grammar and organization are not the primary criteria here, I do expect you to write in **complete sentences** and to formulate your thoughts as clearly as possible. In other words, you should think of these responses as something akin to formal journal entries, rather than a random assemblage of notes and observations.

I will not assign specific grades to the film responses. If you submit a response that more or less tries to address the prompt, you will receive full credit for that response. There are no “grades” for the responses, but you will receive credit for them as follows:

- √+ indicates complete fulfillment of the expectations and *full credit*;
- √ indicates that there are some problems with the response, but you still receive *full credit*;
- √- indicates that the response does not satisfactorily address the issues at hand or demonstrate a careful viewing of the film and therefore only receives *partial credit*;
- 0 indicates either that you did not submit a response at all, or that the response submitted is so deficient that you will receive *no credit* for that particular assignment

Midterm Exam: You will complete a short take-home written midterm exam due during the second week. The midterm will focus on the films, readings, and concepts covered in the first 6 class meetings.

Final paper: In lieu of a final exam, you will submit a 3-5 page paper in which you analyze a specific film or pair of films with regard to the main themes of the course. More details of the requirements and expectations for the final paper will be provided after the midterm exam. The final paper will be due during the last week of class.

Student Responsibility and Code of Conduct

Standards of study and conduct in the ECES Program are set and maintained. You are subject to the general standards and requirements of Charles University in regard to attendance, examinations, and conduct, as well as to specific requirements of the program. The student is expected to assume the initiative in completing all requirements at the time specified.

It is the responsibility of the student to be informed concerning all regulations and procedures required. In no case will a regulation be waived or an exception granted because a student pleads ignorance of the regulation or asserts that he/she was not informed by an advisor or other authority.

Charles University expects all students to adhere to the highest standards of ethics and academic integrity. Students certify that all work (whether an examination, research paper, research project, form of creative expression, or any other academic undertaking) submitted for evaluation, presentation, or publication meets these standards.

All forms of academic fraud are strictly prohibited. An automatic grade of F will result for the entire course if a student is found guilty of academic misconduct. These include, but are not limited to:

- Plagiarism
- Cheating
- Falsification
- Violation of professional ethics
- Misrepresentation or research data

Weekly Schedule

Day 1	<p>Introduction: Brief History of the Jews in Central Europe and Early Depictions of the Jew 1</p> <p><u>Film:</u> <i>Der Golem, wie er in die Welt kam (The Golem: How He Came into the World, 1920)</i></p>
Day 2	<p>Early Depictions of the Jew 2; Yiddish Film Culture in the 1920s</p> <p><u>Reading:</u> Omer Bartov, <i>The “Jew” in Cinema</i> (selection) Lester Friedman, “Jews as Monsters / Jews as Victims” S. S. Praver, “Der Golem – wie er in die Welt kam” from <i>Between Two Worlds</i> Noah Isenberg, “Weimar Cinema, the City, and the Jew” from <i>Between Redemption and Death</i></p> <p><u>Screening:</u> <i>Der Dibuk (The Dybbuk, 1937)</i></p>
Day 3	<p>Yiddish Film Culture in the 1930s – 1</p> <p><u>Reading:</u> Elzbieta Ostrowska, “The Dybbuk” from <i>The Cinema of Central Europe</i> J. Hoberman, “Out of Galicia” from <i>Bridge of Light: Yiddish Film between Two Worlds</i></p>
Day 4	<p>Yiddish Film Culture in the 1930s – 2</p> <p><u>Reading:</u> J. Hoberman, “On the Edge of the Abyss” from <i>Bridge of Light: Yiddish Film between Two Worlds</i></p> <p><u>Screening:</u> <i>Freylekhe Kabtsonim (Jolly Paupers, 1937)</i></p>
Day 5	<p>Diaspora, trans-Atlantic Yiddish culture, and Nazism</p> <p><u>Reading:</u> Vincent Brook, “Forging the ‘New Jew’: Ulmer’s Yiddish Films” from <i>The Films of Edgar G. Ulmer</i></p>

	<p>J. Hoberman, “The Greening of Yiddish Cinema” from <i>Bridge of Light: Yiddish Film between Two Worlds</i></p> <p>Pekar/Buhle, “Edgar Ulmer and Green Fields”</p> <p><u>Screenings:</u></p> <p><i>Grine Felder (Green Fields, 1937) – selections</i></p> <p><i>Daleka cesta (Distant Journey, 1949)</i></p>
Day 6	<p>Remembering and Memorializing the Holocaust during the Cold War – 1</p> <p><u>Reading:</u></p> <p>Peter Hames, “The Holocaust” from <i>Czech and Slovak Cinema</i></p> <p>Jiří Cieslar, “Distant Journey” from <i>The Cinema of Central Europe</i></p>
Day 7	<p>Remembering and Memorializing the Holocaust during the Cold War – 2</p> <p><u>Reading:</u></p> <p>Peter Hames, “The First Wave” from <i>The Czechoslovak New Wave</i></p> <p><u>Screening:</u></p> <p><i>Obchod na korze (The Shop on Main Street, 1965)</i></p>
Day 8	<p>Remembering and Memorializing the Holocaust during the Cold War – 3</p> <p><u>Reading:</u></p> <p>Ľubica Mistríková, “A Shop on the High Street” from <i>The Cinema of Central Europe</i></p> <p><u>Screening:</u></p> <p><i>Jakub der Lügner (Jacob the Liar, 1975)</i></p>
Day 9	<p>Remembering and Memorializing the Holocaust during the Cold War - 4</p> <p><u>Reading:</u></p> <p>Sander Gilman, “Is Life Beautiful?”</p>

<p>Day 10</p>	<p>Reengaging with Jewish identity after 1989 -1</p> <p><u>Reading:</u> TBA</p> <p><u>Screening:</u> <i>Ida</i> (2014)</p>
<p>Day 11</p>	<p>Reengaging with Jewish identity after 1989 -2</p> <p><u>Reading:</u> David Denby, “ ‘Ida’: A Film Masterpiece” Mikołaj Gliński, “Much Ado About Ida” Filip Mazuczak, “Is ‘Ida’ Really Anti-Polish and Anti-Semitic?”</p> <p><u>Screening:</u> <i>Alles auf Zucker</i> (<i>Go for Zucker</i>, 2004)</p>
<p>Day 12</p>	<p>Reengaging with Jewish identity after 1989 – 3; Conclusion</p> <p><u>Reading:</u> Stephen Holden, “Can’t We All Just Get Along? Yes, if There’s Money at Stake” Jody K. Biehl, “Germany Breaks a Taboo: Jewish Comedy Kosher as Pork Chops” Jill S. Smith, “Reviving German-Jewish Comedy: Dani Levy’s Family Farce <i>Go For Zucker!</i>”</p>
	<p>FINAL PAPER DUE</p>

NOTE: The syllabus is subject to changes or alterations at the discretion of the instructor. Students will be informed of any changes to the syllabus as soon as they are made, either via email or orally in class.