Request Form for General Education Certification:  
Humanities Requirement: (Except FYSM, please include a syllabus)

Faculty Member(s): Larry Krasnoff  
Course Number: JWST 245/ENGL 191  
Course Name: Introduction to Jewish-American Literature  
Department of faculty member(s): Philosophy/Jewish Studies  
Course Description: An introduction to Jewish-American literature from the 20th century to the present.

I. Explain how the proposed course satisfies the following Approval Criteria for Humanities:

1. The primary purpose of the course is the examination of particular expressions of human culture in their social, historical, intellectual, aesthetic, or ethical dimensions.

The course examines important works of Jewish-American literature, which had outsized influence on American literature in the 20th century. In this course, these works are studied in their social, historical, intellectual, and aesthetic dimensions.

2. The course must analyze how ideas are represented, interpreted, or valued in these cultural expressions.

The course examines what it means to be both American and Jewish, what a novel is or should be, and how these questions are related to one another in the works under examination.

3. The course must examine relevant primary source materials as understood by the appropriate discipline(s).

Students must read primary works of literature.

4. The course must require students to interpret the material in writing assignments (or alternatives that require equally coherent and sustained analysis).

The course demands that students write papers and exam essays analyzing the novels assigned for the course.
II. Please provide an example of a signature assignment that the proposed course would use to enable assessment of the humanities learning outcome, using the evidence and grading rubric for the respective outcome

**Outcome 1:** Students analyze how ideas are represented, interpreted or valued in various expressions of human culture. *(List Outcome 1 on Syllabus)*

**Evidence:** Paper or equivalent assignment in which students analyze an idea or ideas related to the course content employing the concepts, methods or practices appropriate to the discipline.

**Standard** At least 80% of students score 3 or 4 on rubric.

**Rubric for SLO 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Does not meet expectations 1</th>
<th>Approaches Expectations 2</th>
<th>Meets expectations 3</th>
<th>Exceeds Expectations 4</th>
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<td>Paper (or equivalent) disregards or fails to coherently engage the idea or ideas. It may lack any appropriate pattern of structure or development. Paper (or equivalent) fails to employ concepts, methods or practices appropriate to the discipline. Paper (or equivalent) shows severe deficiencies in reading and writing college-level English or the Target Language of the course.</td>
<td>Paper (or equivalent) is unsatisfactory in multiple ways. It displays serious weaknesses in composition and analysis of the idea or ideas, and does not adequately employ concepts, methods and practices appropriate to the discipline.</td>
<td>Paper (or equivalent) is competent, though sometimes marginally so. It displays adequate analysis of the idea or ideas and satisfactory employment of concepts, methods or practices appropriate to the discipline. Paper (or equivalent) demonstrates proficiency in the conventions of written English or the Target Language of the course.</td>
<td>Paper (or equivalent) displays cogent analysis of the idea or ideas and informed employment of concepts, methods or practices appropriate to the discipline. Paper (or equivalent) demonstrates excellent composition skills in English or the Target Language of the course.</td>
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**Outcome 2:** Students examine relevant primary source materials as understood by the discipline and interpret the material in writing assignments (or alternatives that require equally coherent and sustained analysis).

**Evidence:** Paper or equivalent assignment involving description, contextualization and interpretation of primary source.

**Standard:** 80% of students receive a score of 3 or 4 on each dimension.

**Rubric for SLO 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Does not meet expectations 1</th>
<th>Approaches Expectations 2</th>
<th>Meets expectations 3</th>
<th>Exceeds expectations 4</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Description:</strong> identify and/or describe the primary source</td>
<td>Incorrect identification, description is inaccurate, inappropriate</td>
<td>Identification/description is insufficient, ambiguous, lacks detail</td>
<td>Identification/description is accurate, adequately detailed despite omissions</td>
<td>Identification/description is stated clearly and comprehensively and includes relevant information</td>
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<td><strong>Context:</strong> situate the primary source in terms of time, place, genre, and/or discipline</td>
<td>Little or no description of context, or irrelevant contextualization</td>
<td>Some description of context, but not adequate</td>
<td>Primary source is reasonably contextualized; contextualization is in terms of more than one context</td>
<td>More nuance and sophistication in terms of situating the primary source; student contextualizes primary source in terms of multiple contexts</td>
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<td><strong>Interpretation:</strong></td>
<td>Paper does not move beyond description, or offers inaccurate or irrelevant interpretation not connected to description</td>
<td>Paper marginally moves beyond description; student offers inadequate or irrelevant evaluation; not reasonable connection to description and context.</td>
<td>Interpretation is reasonably connected to the description and contextualization; student offers evaluation that is less than comprehensive.</td>
<td>Interpretation arises from description and contextualization; student offers evaluation supported by the contextualization and description; student’s insight takes into account the complexities of the primary source.</td>
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COURSE SYLLABUS

Instructor

Larry Krasnoff  Office: 16 Glebe St., Room 300
Phone: 953-4987  E-mail: krasnoff@cofc.edu
Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday, 11:00-1:00

Description

A study of Jewish-American literature from the early 20th century to the present. In the years after World War II, for the first time, Jewish-American writers produced some of the most outstanding and influential fiction in the United States. We will study how this happened, and the implications that it has had. We will be interested in the ways these Jewish-American writers reflected and shaped both the changing nature of the Jewish experience in America, and the changing nature of American literary culture.

Required Texts

Abraham Cahan, The Rise of David Levinsky
Anzia Yezierska, Bread Givers
Henry Roth, Call It Sleep
Saul Bellow, The Adventures of Augie March
Philip Roth, Goodbye, Columbus
Philip Roth, Sabbath’s Theater
Allegra Goodman, Kaaterskill Falls
Jonathan Safran Foer, Everything Is Illuminated

Required Work

Two short papers (25% of grade)
One longer paper (25% of grade)
Midterm and final exams (40% of grade)
Attendance and class participation (10% of grade)
General Education Student Learning Outcomes

This class earns general education credit in the humanities. The humanities is the sustained analysis of the nature and value of particular expressions of human culture, and a general education class in the humanities will lead to the following learning outcomes.

1. Students analyze how ideas are represented, interpreted or valued in various expressions of human culture.

2. Students examine relevant primary source materials as understood by the discipline and interpret the material in writing assignments.

These learning outcomes are assessed on the final exam essay.

Schedule of Readings

Week 1  Introduction  Emerson, “The American Scholar” (www.emersoncentral.com/amscholar.htm)


Week 3  Cahan, Books XII-XIV  Yezierska, *Bread Givers*, Book I

Week 4  Yezierska, Books II-III  Roth, *Call It Sleep*, Book I

Week 5  Roth, Books II-III  Roth, Book IV; PAPER #1 DUE

Week 6  Bellow, *Adventures of Augie March*, chapters 1-7  Bellow, chapters 8-11

Week 7  Bellow, chapters 12-17  Bellow, chapters 18-22

Week 8  Bellow, chapters 23-26  MIDTERM EXAM

Week 9  Roth, *Goodbye, Columbus* (novella)  Roth, short stories

Week 10  Goodman, *Kaaterskill Falls*, Parts I-III; PAPER #2 due  Goodman, Parts IV-VII
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<tr>
<th>Week 11</th>
<th>Foer, <em>Everything is Illuminated</em>, pp. 1-160</th>
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<td>Foer, pp. 161-276</td>
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<td>Week 12</td>
<td>Roth, <em>Sabbath’s Theater</em>, pp. 1-104</td>
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<td>Roth, <em>Sabbath’s Theater</em>, pp. 105-185</td>
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<td>Week 13</td>
<td>Roth, <em>Sabbath’s Theater</em>, pp. 186-303</td>
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<td>Roth, <em>Sabbath’s Theater</em>, pp. 304-451</td>
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<td>Week 14</td>
<td>Summary and review; PAPER #3 DUE</td>
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FINAL EXAM QUESTIONS

You will have three hours to write your final exam. You are to choose one of the following topics and write a single essay in response. Your essay must discuss each of the four novels we have read in this second half of the course. You may bring your texts to the exam; however, no drafts, outlines, or notes are permitted.

1. The tone of the first generation of Jewish-American novels is serious, even earnest or melodramatic; any comedy or irony seems extrinsic or even unintentional. But over the course of the next generation, comedy becomes the dominant mode of the novels we have read in this class. Why? What makes the Jewish-American experience that started so seriously seem so funny to these authors? What do the particular comic tones of each of the five novels we have read in this part of the course, from Roth to Safran Foer, suggest about that experience?

2. In the work of Roth and Safran Foer, male sexual desire is a powerful force, insistent and often socially inappropriate. The central male characters’ sexuality not only drives their behavior and misbehavior, but also seems connected somehow to their identity as Jewish. Explain how this plays out in each of these novels, and discuss Goodman as a kind of contrasting case. What is the significance of this linking of Jewishness and male sexuality?
   (Alternate, more polemical form of the question: Is the tradition of Jewish-American literature somehow misogynist?)

3. In the earliest novels we read, the modern American city is a new and overwhelming world that needs to be mastered; in Bellow, it seems to stand for the overflowing possibilities of American life. But after The Adventures of Augie March, the city starts to stand for decline and even decay, and the characters often depart (or dream of departing) for somewhere else. How do these later novels understand the idea of Jewish-Americans leaving the city? How successful is the thought of departure?
   (Alternate, more polemical form of the question: in the American mind, the image of urban decline is the increased prevalence of African-Americans in the city, accompanied by fears of violence and criminality. Discuss the subtext of race and perhaps racism in these novels. How do these Jewish-Americans authors and their characters understand their relation to, and the social position of, African-Americans?)

4. In a well-known essay, the critic Irving Howe argued what we have come to know as Jewish-American literature is not essentially Jewish, because it is not essentially connected to the main history of Jewish texts, from then Bible through rabbinic literature. Instead, Howe argued that what we call Jewish-American literature is essentially American immigrant literature, and he predicted that the Jewish-American novel would fade into disappearance as Jewish-Americans grew more distant from their immigrant past.
Use the novels we have read in the second half of the course to evaluate this argument. Is this tradition heading for decline or disappearance? Is there something in this tradition that transcends the immigrant experience, that could survive beyond it? Is that something recognizably Jewish?

5. *Sabbath’s Theater* is, almost despite itself, a love story: the story of the love of Mickey Sabbath for Drenka Balich. It is perhaps the only genuinely positive account of romantic love we have read in the entire course, the only time an author seems to understand a romantic relationship as finally successful. How should we account for the strangeness of this fact? What makes the romantic relationships in the other novels we have read, from Roth to Safran Foer, less than fully successful? What is the connection between these relationships and Roth’s unsettling image of Mickey Sabbath masturbating onto Drenka’s grave?