

# SLC494 / SPA494 / JST494 - LATIN AMERICAN JEWISH CULTURE

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LL422C – 965-3752 – Office hours: M 1-4; TTh 12-1.30 or by appointment (contact me by e-mail)



**1. Course Description:** This course will focus on forms of cultural production in Latin America marked by or under the aegis of Jewish diasporic identity from the late nineteenth century to the present. While Jewish immigrants and Latin Americans of Jewish descent may be found in all Latin American societies, cultural production is found concentrated in countries like Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, and Chile. We will be investigating essentially cultural versions of a sociohistorical consciousness, and we will range across a broad spectrum of Latin American Jewish texts in an investigation of what forms of production have emerged to represent this important immigrant component of Latin American national societies. We will examine novels and other literary works, along with photography and films, and we will look at theme, motifs, characters that can be identified with what might be called a Jewish consciousness or Jewish sensitivity. Of interest will be the study of how this writing interacts with other immigrant cultural production and how it interacts with the hegemonic modes of the Hispanic or Portuguese traditions that underlie contemporary Latin American societies. In addition to investigating the historical definitions of what can be called Jewish including identity politics and the resistance to identity politics, we will examine the several and different cultural traditions in Latin America pertinent to minority and/or immigrant writing. The course will be conducted in Spanish, and will read the texts in Spanish and write their final research paper in Spanish. Brazilian texts may be read in either Portuguese, Spanish, or English.



**2. Student Learning Outcomes:** Students will be able to explain the features of Latin American immigrant societies and the important role Jewish culture and its institutions play in Latin America. They will learn the basic sociohistorical frameworks of Jewish immigration to Latin America, and they will acquire a critical and analytical vocabulary for an adequately informed conversation about the social and cultural roles Jews have played in Latin America. They will be able to explain the conflicts between Latin American Christian heritage and the forms anti-Semitism has taken in Latin America. They will learn

to articulate concepts relating to major issues such as cultural survival vs. assimilation and the Latin American understandings of cultural diversity. They will become conversant with the interaction between Spanish and Portuguese and the Jewish languages, specifically the important identify power of Yiddish and Sefardí. Finally, they will come to discuss in detail the importance of considering immigrant cultures in as a challenge to the dominant belief of a Luso-Hispanic, Spanish/Portuguese-speaking Catholic continent. Outcomes will be measured on the basis of concepts articulated and level of expository development in essays throughout the course and in the final research paper.

**3. Assignments:** Students will be required to write brief (500-word) critical response papers on five texts examined in the course, the three films and two other texts. Each of these five essays will represent 4% of the final grade, with class participation equally 20% of the final grade. Class time will be spent in examining select response papers toward establishing a clear model for such essays. Each student with prepared a 12-15 page essay on one important text chosen in consultation with the instructor. This essay will represent 60% of the final grade. Honors credit may be earned for the course by completing an additional 10-page research paper. All essays must represent the exercise of academic analysis and interpretation, grounded in relevant sociohistorical background reading and consultation of prior critical commentary. Essays will be written in two versions, with the final grade based on the second version incorporating comments made by the instructor on the first version. All essays will receive two grades, one for quality of linguistic expression and one for substantive content; both grades are equal weight.

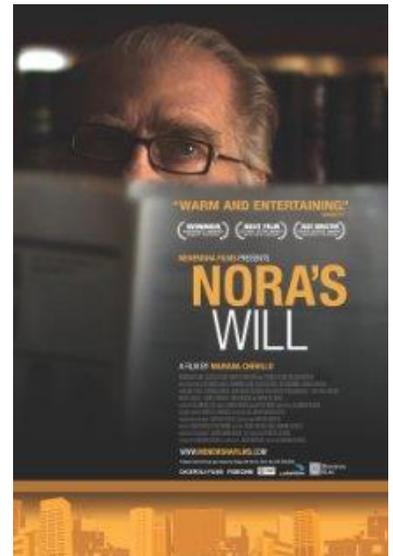
#### **4. Grading Scale:**

The grading scale for the final essay is as follows:

- A+ (100-99) – superior scholar showing depth of thought and documentation
- A – 93-98) – excellent scholarship showing depth of thought and documentation
- A- (90-92)- potentially excellent scholarship with revisions
- B+(87-89) – solid scholarship with potential for original critical thought
- B – (83-86) – solid scholarship, but some gaps in thought and documentation
- B- (80-82) – serious deficiencies in critical thinking and documentation
- C+ (77-79) – mediocre scholarship, but evidence of adequate research
- C (70-76) – mediocre scholarship with deficient scholarship
- D (60-69) - does not meet minimal scholarly standards
- E (below 60) – failure to complete coursework

#### **5. Required Readings:**

David William Foster, ed., *Latin American Jewish Cultural Production*



Stephen A. Sadow, *King David's Harp: Autobiographical Essays by Jewish Latin American Writers*

Alberto Gerchunoff, *The Jewish Gauchos of the Pampas*

Marjorie Agosín, *Always from Somewhere Else*

Moacyr Scliar, *The War in Bom Fim*

Jaboco Timerman, *Prisoner without a Name, Cell without a Number*

Ana María Shua, *The Book of Memories*

Michel Laub, *Diary of the Fall*

## 6. Films to Be Viewed

Daniel Burman, *El abrazo partido (Lost Embrace)*

Mariana Chinello, *Cinco días sin Nora (Nora's Will)*

Caio Hamburger, *O ano em que meus país saíram de férias (The Year My Parents Went on Vacation)*

## 6. Course Itinerary:

Weeks 1-2 – The Jewish Diaspora and Latin America (read Sadow)

Weeks 3-4 - Argentina as the anchor Latin American Jewish community (continue reading Sadow; read Gerchunoff) (first written essay)



Week 5 – View Burman film (write critique of film)

Week 6 – Assimilation vs. Cultural Survival (continue reading Gerchunoff; read Agosín)

Week 7 – Jewish culture and hegemonic Hispanic Catholic institutions (continue reading Agosín)

Week 8 – Jewish daily life in Latin American; versions of history (read Scliar)

Week 9 – View Hamburger film (write critique of film)

Weeks 10-11 – Anti-Semitism in Latin American (read Timerman); Marcelo Brodsky's

photography (second written essay)

Weeks 12-13 – Jewish humor and cultural conflict (read Shua) (first draft of final paper due)

Week 14 – View *Cinco días sin Nora* (write film critique)

Week 15 – Summary: Not Jewish or Latin American, but Jewish and Latin American: the return to the image of the Jewish Gaucho (final manuscript of final paper due)

**7. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Please see the official university policy on academic dishonesty:**

<http://provost.asu.edu/academicintegrity>.

**8. Disability Accommodations:** Qualified students with disabilities who will require disability accommodations in this class are encouraged to make their requests to me at the beginning of the semester either during office hours or by



appointment. **Note:** Prior to receiving disability accommodations, verification of eligibility from the Disability Resource Center (DRC) is required. Disability information is confidential. Students who feel they will need disability accommodations in this class but have not registered with the Disability Resource Center (DRC) should contact DRC immediately. Their office is located on the first floor of the Matthews Center Building. DRC staff can also be reached at: 480-965-1234 (V), 480-965-9000

(TTY). For additional information, visit: [www.asu.edu/studentaffairs/ed/drc](http://www.asu.edu/studentaffairs/ed/drc). Their hours are 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM, Monday through Friday.

**9. Policy against Threatening Behavior:** All incidents and allegations of violent or threatening conduct by an ASU student (whether on-or off campus) must be reported to the ASU Police Department (ASU PD) and the Office of the Dean of Students. If either office determines that the behavior poses or has posed a serious threat to personal safety or to the welfare of the campus, the student will not be permitted to return to campus or reside in any ASU residence hall until an appropriate threat assessment has been completed and, if necessary, conditions for return are imposed. ASU PD, the Office of the Dean of Students, and other appropriate offices will coordinate the assessment in light of the relevant circumstances.

**10. Other Policies:** Students will be allowed two unauthorized absences from class. Religious holidays, in accord with official published university list count automatically as authorized absences, as well as do official university-sanctioned activities. Pagers, cell phones, and recording devices are not permitted to be used in class. Classroom conduct must be in accord with university policy regarding threatening behavior (see *Student Services Manual SSM 104-02*).