

English 461
Jewish American Fiction, 1920-2020
Prof. Joel Berkowitz
Spring 2021
Online synchronous, M/W 9:30 – 10:45

This course will survey major writers and noteworthy works of American Jewish fiction from the work of pioneering figures between the World Wars to contemporary times. We will start with foundational writers examining the lives of eastern European Jewish immigrants to the United States and those of their descendants, and follow the development of American Jewish fiction writing as it blossomed in subsequent decades, producing some of the most talked-about and influential creators of American novels and short stories. The course will ultimately proceed to the contemporary period, during which new generations of writers have built further layers on the edifice laid by earlier masters, and responded to a rapidly changing America, and a different Jewish world. Weekly synchronous online class meetings will include visits by contemporary writers, taking us directly to the source of some of our readings.

Work for the course will consist of short reflective essays, longer essays synthesizing major themes, and participation in online discussion threads and in weekly synchronous virtual class sessions.