WEEK ONE
Course outline

Week One: (April 6) An introduction to the historical background of Yiddish, including social and political history, linguistic derivation of Yiddish and Ladino from host languages, and the establishment of Yiddish-speaking communities in Europe. Guest: Rabbi Edward Zerin

Week Two: (April 13) Jews in the Middle Ages; a brief look at the grammar and rhetoric of Yiddish. The origins of vocabulary and expressions. Guest: "Fishl" of Der Bay


Week Four: (April 27) Yiddish folk tales and folk music; early Yiddish literature

Week Five: (May 4) Yiddish literature from the 19th century: An introduction to literature written in Yiddish, including such writers as the Baal Shem Tov, Sholem Yankev Abramovitch’s novel Dos kleyne menshele ("The Little Person"), Mendele Moykher-Sforim, Sholem Aleichem.

Week Six: (May 11) Yiddish in America: the emergence of Yiddish arts and letters in the U.S.; the use of Yiddish in American Jewish media. The Red Hot Chachkas

Week Seven: (May 18) Yiddish in media, theater, music. Yiddish theater and Yiddish entertainers in America; The Thomashevskys and other entertainers. Guest: Manfred Wolf

Week Eight: (June 1) Contemporary writing in Yiddish and influenced by Yiddish literature: Isaac Bashevis Singer, Cynthia Ozick, and others.

Alter kocker: a crotchety, fussy, ineffectual old man

Bubbeh/zayde: grandmother/grandfather

Mensh: a human being; an upright person

Meshuggener: a crazy person

Momzer: a bastard, illegitimate; a skillful rascal

Nebech: an unlucky man

Nudnik: a pest, a monumental bore

Schaygets/shikse: a gentile man/woman

Shlepper: a jerk, a drip; someone unkempt

Shlemiel: a foolish person, a simpleton

Shlimazl: a chronically unlucky person

Shmegegge: a whiner, an unadmirable, untalented type

Shmuck: (shmo) a dope, a jerk

Shnorrer: a beggar; a cheapskate; a bum or drifter

Yenta: a female gossip, rumor monger