

Shulamit Magnus

Oberlin College

Spring, 2012

Jewish Studies/ History 233

Jewish Memoirs and Memory: Writing the Self in Jewish Society

Tu Th 9:30-10:50 King

Shulamit.Magnus@Oberlin.edu

Office: Rice 310

Office hours: Tu Th 11-12:30, and by appointment. Self sign-up on sheets on my office door weekly. If no o hour time works, speak with/email me.

x58529 (good during office hours, not otherwise a good way to reach me)

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This course explores the emergence of writing about the self and individual experience in a culture that traditionally put primacy on collective memory and expression, and supported and encouraged only that of men, reading memoirs by Jewish women and men for what they can tell us about the relationship of self and Jewish society and the larger world, and about a Jewish genre that blends literature and history.

Fundamental questions we will ask are:

Why did Jewish memoirists write? Who was the memoirists' intended audience? What is the relationship between personal and collective Jewish experience in the memoirs? How does the larger historical context influence individual Jewish experience and expression? What role do gender, class, age at the time of writing, play in the portrayal? Is memory necessarily nostalgic? What role do anger, guilt, desire for revenge, self-aggrandizement, play in memoir writing? How do memoirists perceive their Jewishness; their relationship with non-Jews? How do we read memoirs critically-- what can you trust about what a memoirist says-- and how do you know? How can memoirs be used as sources of Jewish history?

We will read memoirs from early modernity to the present, not necessarily in chronological order, from Europe and the US. Prior study of Jewish history (particularly JWST 132) is helpful but not required.

This syllabus contains much information, for which you are responsible. Read it; ask me any questions. It is online at the JWST, HIST, and course bb sites should you need another hard copy.

REQUIREMENTS:

Attendance, Participation: Attendance is expected, will be noted, and will factor in the final grade. If illness or emergency prevents your attendance, please contact me as soon as you are able. If such prevents your preparing for class or participating but you are able to attend, please do; speak with me. If any circumstance prevents you from meeting any course requirement in an ongoing way, please speak to me sooner than later.

* In the unlikely event that class is cancelled for any reason, e.g., for weather, stay current with the syllabus: prepare the current and next session on schedule; we will arrange a makeup class.

Discussion: Class will be a mix of lecture and informed student participation. Students are expected to have done the session's readings, prepared insights to contribute, and to engage those of others in active discussion.

Observation papers (OPs): To make your reading more effective and to facilitate participation, each student is required to bring ONE page of observations on the readings to each class and submit these to me at its end; no late submissions. OPs are to be informed comments about the reading, points you take from or synthesize about them: a blend of response and analysis, NOT a report about or summary of readings, your notes on them, nor simply subjective reactions to them. As we proceed, make comparisons, draw contrasts. OPs need not be in polished writing, outline is fine, but they must be comprehensible and either typed or in legible handwriting. They should contain substantiated "I" statements: I found this ironic; contradictory; puzzling BECAUSE..." The "because" is crucial. You may say something is "interesting" ONLY if you say why you find it so.

I will not grade individual OPs but your consistency in submitting them and their overall quality will count toward your final grade, along with participation in discussion (see grade breakdown, below). The best OPs will not substitute for participation in class. If you are having trouble entering discussion, speak to me.

Reading: ALL REQUIRED READING EXCEPT encyclopedia articles has been ordered on shelf reserve in Mudd. This is the default option for doing readings.

Since we are reading mostly whole works, not much is on eres (indicated on the syllabus). That means you should have your own copies of readings, obtained through individual or shared purchase—titles have been ordered in the College bookstore. Ohio Link or other ILL is another option but be sure to allot sufficient time to receive and do readings. The Hillel Library (Wilder), is another possible source. Always bring assigned reading to class. PLEASE NOTE that pagination in different editions may well differ from what is on the syllabus, the more reason to get and check readings several weeks in advance.

If you do not find a title on shelf reserve or eres, ASK RESERVE ROOM STAFF, preferably the supervisor, Michael Palazzolo, immediately. Emailing me is NOT an effective route for help with library (or bookstore) issues (all I can do is email Mr.

Palazollo/ the Bookstore), and will not excuse you from obtaining readings. Do tell me of any problem your efforts do not resolve. Secure readings well before you need to do them; best, check all at the start of the semester. Definitely do not leave obtaining them to the day before class. Check eres several ways: title; author; editor.

However you do it, it is the responsibility of each student to obtain the readings; there is no excused failure to do this. If illness, emergency, prevents you from doing them, see "Attendance, Participation," above.

Lead-off presentation: Each student will lead off 1-2 sessions, taking 7-10 minutes (enforced; practice—the time goes fast), to tell us about the author and her/ his time and place, based on encyclopedia articles/ web search, and to lay the groundwork for discussion by stating A FEW (no more than 3) MAIN themes and issues, as you do in your OPs, but n more developed form. See above, "fundamental questions," for some approaches. On day of leadoff, submit your outline instead of an OP. Should there be a session with no lead off presenter, we will do a round table, with everyone contributing a discussion point from your OPs.

Writing: there will be two essays of 5-6 typed, double-spaced pages at approximately one month intervals (due dates on syllabus), based on assigned readings; and one 12-15-page research paper on a topic you choose, in consultation with me, done as the course final project, due on or before the date set for the Final exam by the Registrar. Instructors have no discretion with this date; request for Incomplete must be processed through the Dean of Studies (keep this in mind when making travel plans). There are no exams.

I will distribute essay topic choices at least a calendar week before essays are due; I am also happy to consider topics you propose, which require my approval. Do not write a Bibliography or formal End or Foot Notes for essays; use abbreviated citation (author, page number, in parentheses), in the body of your text. Unless you have authorization, late submission will result in 1/3 grade reduction per day of lateness (A- becomes B+, etc.), lateness beginning with the class session on the submission due date.

Essays and Final Paper must be:

typed, double-spaced, in 12 guage font, composed in grammatical English, with correct spelling; paginated; stapled; with the date, title of essay or paper, your name, and a signed Honor Code declaration. **HARD COPY ONLY SUBMISSION OF ALL WRITTEN WORK,** including OPs; no electronic submissions.

Organization, clarity, coherence, and substantiated argumentation count heavily. Write simply, precisely, and directly, using the fewest words needed to express your thought. Avoid jargon; passive tense; slang; inflated language. Your writing must be self-sufficient: your imagined audience is someone interested and intelligent but uninformed, whose only sole source of information about your topic is you. Quote sparingly, if at all, only to illustrate a point that YOU make. Use one or more of the writing guides listed below (see also with Spring Break) for tips on effective writing. Work with College writing tutors on drafts, after which I will also be happy to review your draft, if you give me at least two days.

Research paper: Focus on one author or on a theme, doing a comparative treatment of at least 3 memoirs that we have NOT read for the course, using the methods we will have learned to analyze memoirs and their authors. You MAY and indeed, should use assigned memoirs and other course readings for the paper, for which you should read ca. 5 new books or their equivalent (ca.8 articles= book). See end of syllabus for select list of *recommended memoirs for your final paper (*you are NOT bound to this list).

You must submit a Statement of your Preliminary Topic and Bibliography before Spring Break, and a revised statement after it; dates on syllabus. You must meet with me before Spring break for topic approval. The paper requires formal Notes and a Bibliography, prepared using respective citation conventions as laid out in any of the following WRITING GUIDES, available in pb:

Diana Hacker, A Pocket Style Manual

May Lynn Rampolla, A Pocket Guide to Writing in History;

Jules Benjamin, A Student's Guide to History

Grading:

40%: participation: 20% discussion and OPs; 20%: leadoff presentation/s;

60%: written work: 15% and 20% for the essays; 25% for the research paper.

HONOR CODE: This course is governed by the College Honor Code, familiarity with and adherence to which is each student's responsibility. Consult the College website, members of the Honor Code committee, a reference librarian, me, with any question.

REQUIRED TITLES: The following have been ordered at the Bookstore:

Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, Zakhor, Jewish History and Jewish Memory

The Memoirs of Gluckel of Hameln, trans. M. Lowenthal

Solomon Maimon, An Autobiography, ed. Moses Hadas

Mary Antin, The Promised Land, Werner Sollors/ Penguin ed. preferred

Eva Hoffman, Lost in Translation

Lucy Dawidowicz, From That Place and Time

Welcome to the course! I look forward to studying with you.

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Jewish Memoirs and Memory: Writing the Self in Jewish Society

Jewish Studies/ History 233 Tu Th 1:30-2:45

1. Introductory 2/7

On reading Jewish memoirs: self and society

In class:

Uriel Dacosta, "My Double Life and Excommunication," in Leo Schwarz, ed., Memoirs of My People, pp.84-94, on eres/ to be distributed and discussed in class

Pauline Wengeroff, "Memoirs of a Grandmother," in Lucy Dawidowicz, ed., The Golden Tradition, pp.160-168, on eres/ to be distributed and discussed in class

Compare these two pieces of writing. Who are the authors; when and where do they write? Why do you think they write? Whom do you think each is writing for (audience), what is the author's main "message," and what effect do you think they they hope to achieve in their readers? How does each piece of writing illuminate a larger issue in Jewish history of its time?

For next time, select 2-3 sessions you'd like to present on; see description/ requirements of lead offs, above.

2. Memoir, Memory, and History 2/9

On being human and having memory; on Jewish collective memory:

Hebrew Bible, Book of Lamentations (Eichah), chps. 3, 5. Any edition ok, in JPS translation (Tanakh, pp, pp1432-1436, 1438-1440) on eres

Hebrew Bible, Book of Psalms, chapter 137 (in JPS Tanakh, p. 1272) on eres

Lawrence Schiffman, Texts and Traditions, pp.471-472 on eres

Lucy Dawidowicz, "History as Autobiography: Telling a Life," in Dawidowicz, What is the Use of Jewish History?, pp.20-37; on eres

Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, Zakhor; Jewish History and Jewish Memory, Prologue, chp. 1, pp.xiii-26

In class: taped Krista Tippett interview

Presenter:

3. Conceptual Approaches, continued 2/14

Yerushalmi, chps. 2-4, pp. 29-103

Presenter:

4. Loss and Recovery/ Discovery 2/16

Google Paul Cowan

Paul Cowan, An Orphan in History, part one, pp. 3-97

Presenter:

5. Cowan, continued 2/21

Cowan, part two, pp. 101-246

Presenter:

6. Glikl Hamel 2/23

The Memoirs of Glückel of Hameln, trans. M. Lowenthal, Introduction (by Robert Rosen), and Books 1-3, pp.1-89

Presenter:

7. Glikl, continued 2/28

Distribute first essay questions; Essays DUE SUNDAY 3/11 BY 5 PM.

Glikl, Memoirs, Books, 4-5, pp.90-174

Presenter:

8. Glikl, Concluding 3/1

Books 5 (rest)-7, pp.174-277

9. Solomon Maimon 3/6

Encyclopaedia Judaica (HENCEFORTH, EJ), "Solomon Maimon" volumes are on the shelf in Mudd; e version also available, ask Reference re: access

Solomon Maimon, An Autobiography, ed. Moses Hadas

Presenter:

10. Pauline Wengeroff 3/8

Pauline Wengeroff, Memoirs of a Grandmother, transl. and ed., Shulamit S. Magnus, I:93-229

Presenter:

Sign up for office hours re: selecting your research paper topic.

First Essay due Sun. 3/11 by 5 PM. Submit electronically to establish submission; hard copy under my office door.

11. Wengeroff, continued 3/13

Memoirs, S. Magnus transl., ed., v.2, pp. TBA

Presenter:

12. To America: Mary Antin 3/15

Mary Antin, The Promised Land, chps. 1-6, pp.1-136 (*pagination as in Houghton Mifflin Sentry ed.; if you use another edition, follow chp. numbers.)

Presenter:

13. Antin, continued 3/20

Antin, chps. 7-13, pp.137-263

Presenter:

PRELIMINARY TOPIC AND BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR YOUR PAPER, DUE NEXT CLASS

14. Antin, continued 3/22

Antin, chps. 14-20, pp.264-364

Presenter:

Preliminary Statement of your topic and bibliography for the research paper due today.

SPRING BREAK 3/24-4/1

Work on your paper topics and Bibliography, revised statement due next class.

STRONGLY RECOMMENDED: over Break, read Howard S. Becker, Writing for Social Scientists (funny and tremendously helpful), or William Zinsser, On Writing Well (classic), or both—well worth it!

15. Another Journey West: Eva Hoffman 4/3

Revised paper topic statement and Bibliography due in class today

Eva Hoffman, Lost in Translation, part one, pp.3-95

Presenter:

16. Hoffman, continued 4/5

Hoffman, part two, pp. 99-164

Presenter:

17. Hoffman, continued 4/10

Hoffman, part three, pp.167-280

Presenter:

18. Chaim Grade: Self, Other, Memory, Guilt 4/12

"Chaim Grade," EJ

Chaim Grade, My Mother's Sabbath Days, Forward and pp.1-128

Second essay choices distributed; essays due FRIDAY 4/20 by 3PM. Electronic submission to establish deadline; hard copy under my office door.

Presenter:

19. Grade, continued 4/12\7

Grade, pp.129-259

Presenter:

20. Grade, continued 4/19

Grade, pp.259-389

Presenter:

21. Yossi Klein Halevy: Whose Memory? Memory and Burden 4/24

Yossi Klein Halevi, Memoirs of a Jewish Extremist, chps. 1-4, pp.1-121

Presenter:

22. Halvey continued, and Conclusion 4/26

Halevy, Memoirs, chps. 5- Epilogue, pp.122-248

Presenter:

23. Raversing Course: Return to Europe: Lucy Dawidowicz 5/1

Lucy Dawidowicz, From That Place and Time, A Memoir, 1938-1947, Preface, Part One, pp.3-138. Note street map of Vilna, just inside the book. Pagination as in 1989/1991 ed.

Presenter:

24. Dawidowicz, continued 5/3

Dawidowicz, From That Place, Parts One and Two, pp.139-273

Presenter:

25. Dawidowicz, Conclusion; Jewish Self-Fashioning: Another Scholar's View 5/8

Dawidowicz, From That Place, Part Three, pp.277-326

Michael Stanislawski, Autobiographical Jews: Essays in Jewish Self-Fashioning, Introduction, chp. 2, pp.3-17, 32-53 (rest of this book, recommended)

Presenter:

26. Siyyum: Course Conclusions 5/10

No assigned reading for today. Instead, read for your papers, come to class with update on your research and thinking for your paper.

And: think back over the course, look at your OPs, and prepare observations about what have you learned; what you are taking from this course. Which memoirs affected you the most—why? What have you learned about Jewish history from these memoirs? Would you think of writing a memoir—why; for whom?

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Recommended memoirs (consider for your papers):

Anthologies with excerpts from range of memoirs:

Memoirs of My People Through A Thousand Years, ed. Leo Schwarz

Lucy Dawidowicz, The Golden Tradition

Full memoirs:

Stephen Dubner, Turbulent Souls: A Catholic Son's Return to His Jewish Family

Helen Epstein, Where She Came From: A Daughter's Search for Her Mother's History

Kim Chernin, In My Mother's House, A Daughter's Story

Rodger Kamenetz, Terra Infirma, A Memoir of a Mother's Life in Mine

J. Singer, Of A World That Is No More

Yekhezkel Kotik, Journey to a Nineteenth-Century Shtetl, The Memoirs of Yekhezkel Kotik, ed. David Assaf

Hinde Bergner, On Long Winter Nights, Memoirs of a Jewish Family in a Galician Township (1870-1900)

The Life and Soul of a Legendary Jewish Socialist, The Memoirs of Vladimir Medem, trans. S. Portnoy

Puah Rakowski, My Life as a Radical Jewish Woman: Memoirs of a Zionist Feminist in Poland, ed. Paula Hyman

Toby Knobel Flueck, Memories of My Life in a Polish Village, 1930-1949 memoir in drawings

Rachel Colof's Story, Jewish Homesteader on the Northern Plains

Helen Jacobus Apte, Heart of a Wife: The Diary of a Southern Jewish Woman

Shulamith Soloveitchik Meiselman, The Soloveitchik Heritage, A Daughter's Memoir

Haviva Ner David, Life at the Fringes, A Feminist Journey to Traditional Rabbinic Ordination

Ilana Blumberg, Houses of Study, A Jewish Woman Among Books

Ruby Daniel, Ruby of Cochin, An Indian Jewish Woman Remembers

Farideh Goldin, Wedding Song, Memoirs of an Iranian Jewish Woman

Nissim Rejwan, The Last Jews in Baghdad, Remembering a Lost Homeland

Jewish Life in Germany, Memoirs from Three Centuries, ed. Monika Richarz (from German-Jewish immigrant to US, 19<sup>th</sup> century-post Shoah= not professional authors)  
Holocaust memoirs— there are hundreds, by famous writers—Eli Weisel, Primo Levi—  
 and not. Below are but a few suggestions.

On Holocaust memory, relevant for other contexts, too, see Lawrence Langer, Holocaust Testimonies: The Ruins of Memory

Peter Gay, My German Question, Growing Up in Nazi Berlin

Cioma Schönhaus, The Forger: An Extraordinary Story of Survival in Wartime Berlin

Edith Hahn Beer, The Nazi Officer's Wife: How One Jewish Woman Survived the Holocaust

David Weiss Halivni, The Book and the Sword

Nechama Tec, Dry Tears: The Story of a Lost Childhood

Miep Gies, Anne Frank Remembered: The Story of the Woman Who Helped to Hide the Frank Family

Irene Gut Opdyke, In My Hands, Memories of a Holocaust Rescuer

Alicia Appelman-Jurman, Alicia, My Story

Elizabeth Ehrlich, Miriam's Kitchen, A Memoir

In Memory's Kitchen, A Legacy from the Women of Terezin