COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course will examine the constellation of history, memory, and family that informs so much of Jewish-American literature. While we will read a handful of pre-2000 texts to get a sense of the wider history and contexts of Jewish literature, the focus of the course this term will be on twenty-first century Jewish narrative across a range of genres, including short story, novel, speculative fiction, graphic memoir, autobiography. In particular, we will look at the ways that writers—through innovative uses of form, history, and story—have created new versions of what it means to be Jewish in America.

GOALS OF COURSE: Students will develop a knowledge of the history, myriad narrative forms, and diverse contexts of Jewish American literature. They will learn to read Jewish American literary texts closely, with an attention to narrative perspective; voice; orientation to place and space; representations of self, family, community, and nation; relationship to displacement and diaspora; and key cultural and historical references.

Caution: Some of the texts and films covered in this course contain depictions and discussions of anti-Semitism, genocide, war, and other forms of violence. I will make every effort to notify you of which materials contain these aspects and I respect any student’s need to protect themselves by skipping portions of readings or visual materials.

TEXTS:
Philip Roth, The Plot Against America
Brenda Serotte, Fortune Teller's Kiss
Amy Kurzweil, Flying Couch
Texts above are available at the Duckstore and online outlets of your choice. You might find them as well at Smith Family Books, Black Sun Books, J. Michaels Books, or Tsunami Books in Eugene. We have a wealth of used book stores!

Stories, articles, and book excerpts listed below are available on the Canvas site for the course.

WORK REQUIREMENTS:
1) **Read!!** Please have each work read by the day it’s listed on the syllabus. For longer works, you may divide them up by the number of class days. Be sure to finish each work by the last day it’s listed on the syllabus.

2) **Reading Quizzes**—Beginning April 4th, please complete the reading quiz for the week on Canvas **Monday by midnight**. This means reading ahead a little for Tuesday’s class. The idea is that you will have read enough to participate in class discussion of the texts coming up that week. **There will be a total of 8 quizzes.**

4) **Point of View Exercise (2-3 pages)**—Choose a passage from one of the texts read so far in class and rewrite it from a different point of view. This could be the point of view of another character, an omniscient point of view, a close in or far out third person point of view, or the point of view of an object. **Due May 6th, on Canvas, by midnight.**

5) **Fortune Teller’s Kiss Assignment**—Choose one of the following options:  
   1) Write a **3-4-page** double-spaced essay on an aspect of the memoir (such as Serotte’s use of food, the layered meanings of the hospital scenes, the role of storytelling, or the focus on place and neighborhood). Be sure to quote from the text and explicate your quotations, tying them to your central idea.
   2) Write a **2-3-page** double-spaced short memoir or poem about an incident from your own childhood that relates to themes of the course, such as cultural/ethnic identity, the role of place and migration, or the relationship between personal and historical memory. This should be accompanied by a **2-page**, double-spaced essay comparing a particular literary technique in your own piece to one used by Serotte. This essay should quote from both your own piece and Serotte’s. Techniques to consider include point of view, use of place, family or community storytelling, use of memory and time. **Due May 18th on Canvas by midnight.**

6) **Final project**—You have two choices:
   1) Please write an essay (**4-5 pages**) on a topic of your choice, focused on one or two texts read in class. This essay should have a clear thesis, be free of grammatical and spelling errors, quote from the text for support and illustration of ideas, and provide close readings of language and scenes from the text.
   2) You may continue working on your own memoir piece or poem or you may start a new creative piece of your choice. Your piece should focus on a theme from the course, such as memory, cultural and ethnic identity, the relationship between personal experience and historical events. This should be **3-5 pages** and should be accompanied by a **2-3-page** essay comparing a literary technique you used (different than the one from the previous assignment, if you did that option) to a related technique used in a text or film from the course. You should quote from both your own work and the class work (or describe film or tv scenes in detail).

**Grade Breakdown:**
Attendance and participation: 10%
Quizzes: 20%
Point of View Assignment: 20%
*Fortune Teller’s Kiss* Assignment: 20%
Final Project: 30%

READING SCHEDULE:

**Week One—What is Jewish literature in America?**
Tues., March 29th—Introductions.
Thurs., March 31st—Kate Bornstein, excerpt from *Queer and Pleasant Danger,*" on Canvas.

**Week Two—How have Jewish writers explored Jewish American identity?**
Tues., April 5th—Excerpt from Mary Antin's 1912 autobiography *The Promised Land* (Canvas)
Thurs., April 7th—Abraham Cahan, “Circumstances” (Canvas). Silent film *East Meets West* viewed in class.

**Week Three—What are the forms and histories of Jewish cultural expression and why do these matter?**
Thurs., April 14th—In class: Episode from *Yid-Life Crisis.* Interview.

**Week Four—How does Reimagining History lead us to Reflect on Jewish Life and Literary Expression in the Present?**
Tues., April 19th—Philip Roth, *The Plot Against America.*
Thurs., April 21st—Roth continued.

**Week Five—Roth continued.**
Tues., April 26th—Philip Roth, *The Plot Against America.*
Thurs., April 28th—Roth. Continued

Point of view exercise due May 6th, by midnight.

**Week Six—Holocaust Narratives—Second and Third Generation**
Tues., May 3rd—Excerpts from graphic memoir *Maus* by Art Spiegelman, shown in class.
Thurs., May 5th—Excerpts from film *Everything is Illuminated* viewed in class.

**Week Seven—How Do Twenty-First-Century Writers Write Self, Family, and History? A Sephardic Memoir.**
Tues., May 10th—Brenda Serotte, *Fortune Teller’s Kiss.*
Thurs., May 12th—Serotte continued.


Fortune Teller’s Kiss assignment due Tuesday, May 17th, at midnight.

Week Eight—How Does a Third-Generation Holocaust Memoir Represent Generational Trauma, History, and Jewish Identity?
Tues., May 17th—Amy Kurzweil, The Flying Couch
Thurs., May 19th—Kurzweil continued

Week Nine—Kurzweil Continued.
Tues., May 24th—Kurzweil.
Thus., May 26th—Kurzweil.

Week Ten—Conclusions and Spillover
Tues., May 31st—Wrapping up the term.
Thurs., June 2nd—Wrapping up the term.

Final essay due on Canvas by midnight on Wed., June 8th.