

JEWES AND THE BROADWAY MUSICAL

Professor Jodi Eichler-Levine

Contact

Dr. Jodi Eichler-Levine

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Email is the **best** way to reach me, but do be patient

Office hours

By appointment; I will have a mix of availability in Williams Hall and availability via Zoom meeting this semester

Course meets

Tuesday/Thursday

2:35-3:50 PM

Packard Lab 508

Fun facts

This summer I binge-watched *The Good Place*. I also like to knit.



Putting It Together

The history of American musical theater is deeply interwoven with the history of American Jews. This course examines how Jews have taken part in musical theater on multiple levels—as composers, lyricists, producers, and performers, among other roles. It also examines how Jews are depicted in Broadway musicals, with particular attention to gender and ethnicity. (HU)

Learning Objectives (and all that jazz)

Students in this course will:

- 1) Become adept at analyzing how ethnicity, race, religion, gender, and other aspects of identity are intertwined in the history of Broadway musicals
- 2) Develop critical writing and speaking skills
- 3) Engage in building information literacy skills through research and a culminating class web page activity



Required texts

The following books are **required**. They can be purchased at University Books and More or wherever fine books are sold. All other required readings will be available on Course Site. There will also be viewings and listenings required on *your own* (along with some in-class viewings).

- William Finn and James Lapine, *Falsettos* (Samuel French 1995)
- Tony Kushner and Jeanine Tesori, *Caroline, or Change* (Theater Communications Group, 2004)
- Stephen Levenson, Benj Pasek, and Justin Paul, *Dear Evan Hansen* (Theater Communications Group, 2017)
- Alisa Solomon, *Wonder of Wonders: A Cultural History of Fiddler on the Roof* (Picador, 2013)
- Joseph Stein, Jerry Bock, and Sheldon Harnick, *Fiddler on the Roof* (Limelight Editions, 1964)

Assignments

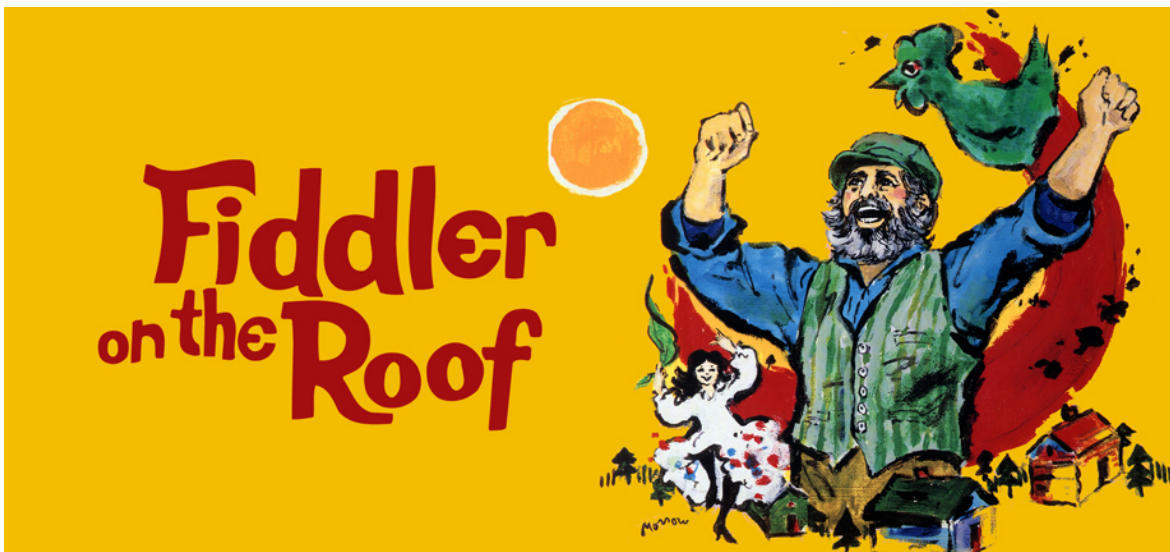
What follows is a general summary of the assignments for this course. Further details about each task will be available on Course Site and in class.

1) Class Attendance and Participation: This will come from a combination of attendance (I will have a sign in sheet) and participation. You don't have to talk all the time, but you do have to show up with the readings in hand, be engaged, participate in group activities as relevant, and say something now and then.

Value: 15% of final grade.

2) Discussion board posts: Posting to the weekly class discussion board at least **once per week**--- either by 9 am on Tuesday (for Tuesday's readings) or by 9 am on Thursday (for Thursday's readings). You will duplicate these posts in two locations in Course Site: An assignments folder and the board itself (the assignment folder is where I will grade it). During weeks with just one class, post on the one day we meet. Other weeks, you get to choose. Each post should be approximately a healthy paragraph long and contain at least





one quote; at least one reaction/bit of analysis; and at least one discussion question. You will not be able to see other student's posts until you have posted yourself. **Value: 20% of final grade. Due date: weekly, 9 am, Tuesday OR Thursday.**

3) Essay 1: "Who Am I, Anyway?": For your first essay, you will write a short (2 page) essay that tells me who you are and why you are taking this course. The first paragraph should resemble a Playbill credit. The rest of the essay should answer a few questions I will be posing to all of you. Further details are available on Course Site. **Due date: Tuesday, 9/4 by 10 pm, online. Value: 10% of final grade.**

4) Essay 2: Essay 2 will be a more traditional essay, such as a comparison and contrast between two of the shows we have studied. There will be a few different options. Details will be available on Course Site. **Due: Thursday, 10/11, by 10 pm, online. Value: 20% of final grade.**

5) Collaborative class web page. As a class, we will produce our own web site on the topic of Jews and the Broadway musical. Everyone will be responsible for one page and I'll also ask you to communicate, link to, and comment on one another's pages. Some class time will be devoted to working on this. **Due: November 29, 10 pm. Value: 20% of final grade**

6) End of semester reflection: In lieu of a final exam, you will have a reflective essay assignment asking you to think about your own growth during the class and what it means to study this topic. As with your other essays, the prompt will be provided on Course Site. **Due: December 6, 10 pm. Value: 15% of final grade**

Extra Credit: This course intersects with a host of other fields in the humanities, arts, and social sciences, including the study of race, gender, history, sexuality, modern languages and literatures, sociology, theater, art history, and philosophy, to name just a few possibilities. Throughout the semester, I will be sharing mentions of events, typically sponsored by academic departments and programs in these fields, that can broaden your intellectual horizons while at Lehigh. You can also ask me about events you have learned about on your own and if they would be suitable for extra credit. For extra credit, you may attend **up to 3** such events and write them up in a 2 page typed, double-spaced summary and reflection paper.

The final date on which you may turn in such papers is **FRIDAY, DECEMBER 7th**. Extra credit folders will appear within other grade segments of the course. Extra credit writing can earn you between 0 and 5 points back within a given grade category.

Policies

Low-tech life: Try it. You'll like it. Although I do permit laptops and tablets in class, I will periodically ask you to close your computers and try writing things by hand and going screen free so there are no distractions, so always have paper and a writing implement handy. **CELL PHONES MUST BE PUT AWAY.** I am permitting these other devices because many of our readings are on Course Site, and I also know that e-book versions of texts can save money. However, I strongly encourage you to try bringing the readings in hard copy, writing by hand, and going screen-free sometimes. It changes how you think. See, for example, the study discussed in this article: <http://www.npr.org/2016/04/17/474525392/attention-students-put-your-laptops-away>

Communication: E-mail is the best way to reach me. However, I receive a high volume of e-mail; you need to allow plenty of time for a reply. (I also typically do not check my work e-mail on weekends, particularly on Saturday). **Always indicate your name and what course you are taking in your e-mail! Your Lehigh university e-mail address is an official form of university communication; check it daily. It is how I will communicate regarding any cancelled classes and other changes.**

Ch-ch-ch-changes: The instructor reserves the **right to alter readings, assignments, or the schedule below**

I DO NOT ACCEPT LATE PAPERS. The only exceptions are extraordinary situations (i.e., hospitalizations, serious family emergencies) that are documented through the Dean of Students' office. This is the best way for me to be fair to everyone. Plan your time accordingly, and get started *early*.

Academic Integrity: Here is the Lehigh University Undergraduate Student Senate Statement on Academic Integrity: "We, the Lehigh University Student Senate, as the standing representative body of all undergraduates, reaffirm the duty and obligation of students to meet and uphold the highest principles and values of personal, moral and ethical conduct. As partners in our educational community, both students and faculty share the responsibility for promoting and helping to ensure an environment of academic integrity. As such, each student is expected to complete all academic course work in accordance to the standards set forth by the faculty and in compliance with the University's Code of Conduct."

Accommodations for students with disabilities: If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting accommodations, please contact both your instructor and the Office of Academic Support Services, Williams Hall, Suite 301 (610-758-4152) as early as possible in the semester. You must have documentation from the Academic Support Services office before accommodations can be granted.





Lehigh University endorses the Principles of Our Equitable Community

[http://www.lehigh.edu/-inprv/initiatives/PrinciplesEquity_Sheet_v2_032212.pdf].

I expect each member of this class to acknowledge and practice these principles. Respect for each other and for differing viewpoints is a vital component of the learning environment inside and outside the classroom. At times, we will disagree. This is normal. However, we will not engage in mockery, the use of slurs, or other disrespectful behavior.

Schedule of Readings

Readings are to be completed *before* the date for which they are assigned; come to class with the readings in hand and key passages that you want to discuss flagged, bookmarked, underlined, or bedazzled. I will have some material prepared for you each day, but the more you enter the class with a sense of what you want to discuss, the more *you* can drive our discussions. **This is a big part of why the online discussion posts are important: they help you to prepare for class.** When viewings are listed, I will indicate whether they will take place in class or you are responsible for locating the film/show in question and watching it *before* class.

Tues. 8.28. Welcome! First class.

Unit 1: Broadway Origins and the Rise of the Integrated Musical

Thurs. 8.30 Andrea Most, *Theatrical Liberalism*, excerpt, 1-13

Sheryl Kaskowitz, "God Bless America: 100 Years of an Immigrant's Anthem."

Suggested: Henry Bial, "Jew Media"

In-class viewing: *Broadway Musicals: A Jewish Legacy*

Tues. 9.4 Andrea Most, *Making Americans*, Chapter 1, 1-31

In-class viewing: *Broadway Musicals: A Jewish Legacy*

Thurs. 9.6 Andrea Most, *Making Americans*, Chapter 4, "We Know We Belong to the Land: The Theatricality of Assimilation on Oklahoma," 101-118

Tues. 9.11 NO CLASS: ROSH HASHANAH (Jewish New Year)



Thurs. 9.13 Viewing: on your own, *before* class: *West Side Story*

Warren Hoffman, *The Great White Way: Race and the Broadway Musical*, Chapter 3

Unit 2: The 1960s and New Visions of Representing Jews in Musicals

Tues. 9.18: Viewing in class: *Funny Girl*

Reading: Stacy Wolf, “Barbra’s *Funny Girl* Body”

Thursday 9.20 Viewing in class: *Funny Girl*

Reading: Liora Moriel, “Barbra Streisand,” *The Encyclopedia of Jewish Women*

<https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/Streisand-Barbra>

Tues. 9.25 *Fiddler on the Roof*, Act I

Thurs. 9.27 *Fiddler on the Roof*, Act II.

Alisa Solomon, *Wonder of Wonders*, 1-84

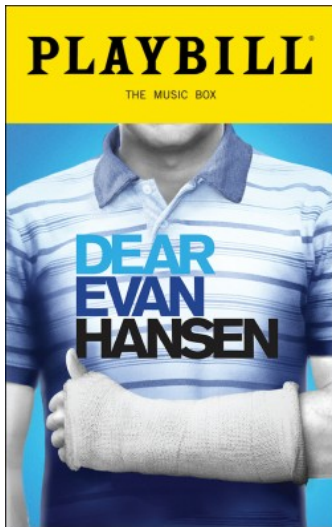
Tues. 10.2 Solomon, *Wonder of Wonders*, 85-232

Thurs. 10.4 Solomon, *Wonder of Wonders*, 233—end

Unit 3: Comedies and Concepts: the 1970s-1980s (with one jump forward to 2001)

Tues. 10.9 Kirsten Fermaglich, “Mel Brooks’ *The Producers*: Tracing American Jewish Culture

Through Comedy, 1967-2007.”



Thurs. 10.11. Wendy Smith, “Good Thing Going: Stephen Sondheim Only Looks Better with Time”

Brief piece: “Stephen Sondheim,” in Abigail Pogrebin, *Stars of David*

Tues. 10.16. PACING BREAK: NO CLASS

Thurs. 10.18 Henry Bial, “Jesus Christ, Broadway Star.” (from *Playing God: The Bible on the Broadway Stage*)

Unit 4: Sexuality, Race, Social Anxiety: Identities, 1990s-2018

Tues. 10.23 William Finn, *Falsettos*, Act I (*March of the Falsettos*)

In class viewing: *Falsettos*

Thurs. 10.25 Finn, *Falsettos*, Act II (Falsettoland). In class viewing: *Falsettos*

Tues. 10.30 Stuart Hecht, *Transposing Jews*, excerpt on *Ragtime*

Thurs. 11.1. CATCH UP DAY (TBD)

Tue. 11.6 Tony Kushner and Jeanine Tesori, *Caroline, or Change*, Act I

ELECTION DAY: DON'T FORGET TO VOTE. REGISTER BY OCT. 9

Thurs. 11.8 Kushner and Tesori, *Caroline, or Change*, Act II

Tues. 11.13 Warren Hoffman, *The Great White Way*, Chapter 5: A Chorus Line. Class visit from the author!

Evening of Tuesday 11.13: Warren Hoffman talk, 7 pm, Williams Global Commons. Great for extra credit. Bring your friends!

Thurs. 11.15. NO CLASS: PROFESSOR EICHLER-LEVINE AT AMERICAN ACADEMY OF RELIGION CONFERENCE.

11/20-11/22. NO CLASS. HAPPY THANKSGIVING

Tues. 11.27 *Dear Evan Hansen*, Act I

Arielle Davinger, “*Dear Evan Hansen*: The Latest Jewish Non-Jewish Musical.”

Thurs. 11.29 *Dear Evan Hansen*, Act II

Renee Ghert-Zand, “Tony-award winner Ben Platt’s Journey from Camp Ramah to Broadway.”

Tues. 12.4 Catch up/class choice/TBD

Thurs. 12.6 Catch up/class choice/TBD