Joint Faculties of Humanities and Theology

YIDC12, Yiddish: Introduction to Yiddish Language, Culture and Literature, 15 credits

Jiddisch: Introduktion till språk, kultur och litteratur, 15 högskolepoäng

First Cycle / Grundnivå

Details of approval

The syllabus was approved by The Pro Dean of First and Second Cycle Studies at The Joint Faculties of Humanities and Theology on 2024-11-27 (U 2024/733) and was last revised on 2026-08-17 (U 2026/437). The revised syllabus comes into effect 2026-09-01 and is valid from the spring semester 2027.

General information

The course is offered as a freestanding course. It can be included in a first or second cycle degree.

Language of instruction: English

Main field of study	*Specialisation*
Yiddish	G1N, First cycle, has only upper-secondary level entry requirements

Learning outcomes

On completion of the course, the students shall be able to

Knowledge and understanding

- account for the historical origin of Yiddish, its linguistic nature as a fusion language, and the European geography of its dialects,
- describe the development of Yiddish literature and culture from the Middle Ages to the Modern Period, and place works studied in the course in a cultural and historical context,
- account for the ideologies that prevailed in Jewish Ashkenazic society in the 19th and 20th centuries, and their approach to the Yiddish language,

Competence and skills

- structure the conditions, emergence and development of modern Yiddish literature,
- demonstrate the ability, both orally and in writing, to analyse and discuss key issues in the history of Yiddish culture and Yiddish literature, as well as broader themes relating to Jewish identity, including religious currents of thought and ideological discourses
- analyze literary and dramatic works both orally and in writing, by applying theories and methods addressed during the course,

Judgement and approach

- take an independent and critical approach to the role that Yiddish literature and drama played in responding to conflict and catastrophe,
- reflect and take position on aspects of identity and otherness within the studied corpus, including but not limited to religion, social class, age, and gender.

Course content

Yiddish has been the spoken language of Ashkenazic (European) Jews for nearly 1,000 years. The birth of this language took place in the German lands during the Middle Ages, and over the centuries it was also spoken in eastern Europe, the United States, and many other countries. Unlike Hebrew, which was traditionally used by the (mostly male) Jewish intellectual elite, Yiddish was spoken by all strata of society. As such, texts in Yiddish record the voices of men, women, and children.

The course presents the vibrant and diverse culture and literature created in Yiddish from its beginnings to the present day. Central literary works, cultural traditions, and historical events will be studied and analyzed in order to provide an overview of the unique world of Yiddish. Special attention will be given to the conflicts and dilemmas brought about by modernity, and to the inner-Jewish discourse on collective identity, including the various attitudes toward the Yiddish language itself. The tragic fate of Yiddish speakers during the Holocaust and its expression in literature will also be highlighted and explored. The course will conclude with a review of the current situation of Yiddish culture, and an optimistic view of its future.

Course design

Teaching consists of 15 lecture/seminar meetings, usually with a reading assignment beforehand. Attendance in 12 meetings is mandatory. A visit to a synagogue and a church will take place as one of the classes.

The opportunity to compensate for compulsory components will be offered to students who have been unable to participate due to circumstances beyond their control such as accidents, illness or similar. This also applies to students who have missed teaching because of duties as a student representative.

Assessment

The assessment is based on two written assignments during the semester and written on-campus exam. When the course is offered online, the written exam is monitored by a camera with the support of real time streaming.

The examiner, in consultation with Disability Support Services, may deviate from the regular form of examination in order to provide a permanently disabled student with a form of examination equivalent to that of a student without a disability.

Grades

Grading scale includes the grades: Fail, Pass, Pass with distinction
For a grade of Pass on the whole course, the student must have been awarded this grade for all assessed components. For a grade of Pass with Distinction on the whole course, the student must have been awarded this grade for all assessed components.

Entry requirements

General requirements

Further information

- The course is offered at the Centre for Languages and Literature, Lund University,
- The credits allocated for course content that in whole or in part is commensurate with another course can only be credited once for a degree.
- For further details, see the current registration information and other relevant documentation.