Yiddish Beginner I
SLTG 5009

Introduction to the language and culture of Ashkenazi Jews

Language course, 3 credits
2017/18 Fall Term

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Office Hours: by appointment

Yiddish

The Yiddish language is 1000 years old, with a very rich linguistic, cultural, literary heritage, its first written literary source dating from 1272. Yiddish was the language spoken by most Ashkenazi Jews until the Holocaust, and it has around half a million speakers even today. Yiddish can be interesting and important to the fields of Jewish studies, Jewish history, anthropology, sociology, cultural heritage studies, women's studies, and many more fields.

As Jewish languages in general, Yiddish is written with the Hebrew alphabet. But having developed in the homeland of Ashkenazi Jews, from a dialect of Middle High German, it is fairly easy to learn for speakers of other Germanic languages. The two-term course is designed to introduce students with no, or very little previous knowledge, to the Yiddish language and written heritage.

Goals and learning outcomes

The objectives of the course are twofold. Students should master basic Yiddish: reading, writing and conversation. Also, they should get an overview of Yiddish written sources, ranging from historical sources through folksongs to literature. By the end of the first term, students will be able to engage in simple conversations, know common greetings and expressions, and read simple texts.

Format

Classes will be based on active student participation, and will focus on reading and speaking skills. There will be homework assigned regularly – these assignments are essential for progress and will be discussed in class. Students should be aware that in order to successfully participate in the course, they will have to dedicate extra time outside the classroom (at least double the time we spend in the classroom).

Attendance
Regular attendance (at least 20 sessions out of 24) is mandatory for everyone, including those who are registered only for Audit. (According to the SLTG Guidelines, students signed up for Audit who fail to meet this requirement will be given a W, or withdraw, grade.)

Assessment.
Student performance will be assessed by regular, bi-weekly tests: four short tests of ca. ten minutes at the beginning of every second week (10 % each) and the mid-term (week 6) and final (week 12) written exams (20 % each), homework and class work (10%).

Reading.
Classes will be based on Sheva Zucker, *Yiddish: An Introduction to the Language, Literature and Culture*, vol. 1. (New York: Workmen's Circle, 1994)

Week 1
- Introduction
- Reading Yiddish
- Present tense, personal pronouns
- Article and gender

Week 2
- Diphthongs
- The verbs *zayn* and *hobn*
- Nominative case
- Word order

Week 3
- Negative
- Plural
- Declension of names

Week 4
- Accusative case
- Diminutive
- Imperative
- *Es* as a subject

Week 5
- Modal verbs
- Irregular infinitives
- Revision

Week 6
- Mid-term test
- Past tense

Week 7
- Family
- Possessive
- Consecutive word order
- Past tense

Week 8
- Food
- Clock
- Numbers
- Dative

Week 9
- Work
- Clauses as sentence units
- Direct object pronoun

Week 10
- Verb plus infinitive
- Past tense

Week 11
- Future tense
- Feminine suffixes
- Declension of nouns

Week 12
- Revision
- Written Exam