



SCHEDULE

MORE INFO AND TICKETS AT
CUJF.ORG/YIDDISHFEST

FULL PROGRAM INFORMATION

Full information about the weekend's events can be found here.
Hyperlinks on each event will take you to our festival website for more.

Friday, November 14

[2:30-4:00pm](#) [Yiddish "Block Party"](#)

Location: Skeuomorph Press @ UIUC FabLab, 1301 S Goodwin Ave, Urbana, IL 61801
Led by Alex Lyon and Dr. Rachelle Grossman

Description: Yiddish literature is deeply connected to the print technologies that made it possible, especially letterpress and block printing. Join us for a presentation on the historical Yiddish press and a hands-on workshop at our campus print shop. Come print a postcard and poster using authentic Yiddish type and historical printing presses!

Registration required. Only a few spots remain!

(Note that this program overlaps with Yiddish 101)

Speaker bio: Alex Lyon is an Art History PhD student at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, whose research focuses on modernist Jewish artists, memory, Yiddish, and the Holocaust. She is also a current board member of the Champaign-Urbana Jewish Federation and teaches Art History online for City College of San Francisco. Lyon was previously the Youth Education Program Director for PreK through 5th grade at Congregation Beth Am in Los Altos Hills, California.

Speaker bio: Rachelle Grossman is an assistant professor in the Department of Comparative and World Literature at UIUC where she specializes in Yiddish. She has a

particular interest in the technologies of print and how literature is affected by its material conditions.

3:00-4:00pm Yiddish 101

Location: Champaign Public Library, Room 215, 200 W Green St, Champaign, IL 61820

Led by Rabbi Gabe Miner

Description: Let's learn Yiddish — *lomir zikh lernen yidish!* In this intro class, you'll get a *tam* (taste) of the language and culture. A great way for anyone curious about Yiddish (Jewish or not) to get a taste of basic vocabulary, expressions, and even learn a Yiddish song!

(Note that this program overlaps with the Yiddish "Block Party")

7:00pm Yiddish Tish

Location: Illini Hillel, 503 E John St, Champaign, IL 61820

Description: Please join us for a *shabbos* dinner at Hillel followed by a community *zingeray* (song session) around the table. No experience with Yiddish language or music necessary– we will teach you the songs! Registration required.

Saturday, November 15

9:45am & 10:30am Kids' Yiddish Storytime

Location: Champaign Public Library, Nate & Lillie Story Room, 200 W Green St, Champaign, IL 61820

Led by Frances Harris

Description: We're taking over the Champaign Public Library's weekly Saturday storytime. Join us for 30 minutes of delightful Yiddish music and stories for children aged birth to 5, with their caregiver or parent. There are two sessions, one starting at 9:45 and the other at 10:30. Come for one, or stay for both!

1:30-3:00pm **“Written in Breath” Performance and Talk**

Featuring Anthony Mordechai Tzvi Russell

Location: Sinai Temple, 3104 Windsor Rd, Champaign, IL 61822

Description: Anthony Mordechai Tzvi Russell will lead a lively discussion where classic Jewish texts (Tehilim, Nevi'im and Talmud) are compared and contrasted with Yiddish texts from songs that are performed as a part of the presentation. [More information here.](#) **Registration required.**

7:30pm (doors open at 7:00pm) **Golden Thread Ensemble “Songs for Social Change” Concert**

Location: The Venue CU,e 51 E Main St, Champaign, IL 61820

Description: Featuring an all-star ensemble made up of beloved Yiddish vocalist Lorin Sklamberg and five leading string players from the klezmer scene, Craig Judelman, Abigale Reisman, Lysander Jaffe, Raffi Boden, and Kirsten Lamb, this project blends techniques and soundscapes from klezmer music, Yiddish theatre, folk song, cantorial repertoire, and classical music in a program that is equal parts story-telling, chamber music and klezmer concert. [More information here.](#) **Registration required.**

Sunday, November 16

11:30am & 1:30pm **Rugelach Workshop**

Led by [Hannah Altshuler of Everyday Feast](#)

Location: Phillips Recreation Center Kitchen, 505 W Stoughton Street, Urbana, IL 61801

Description: Rugelach, Yiddish for “small corners” (*rogelekh*), are flaky pastry horns, often filled with nuts and fruit. These humble cookies originated in Jewish communities in Poland and can teach us a lot about Yiddish history and culture. Join us for a very tasty hands-on workshop where we will make these treats. Two sessions are available, one beginning at 11:30am and the other at 1:30pm. Space is limited.

Oysfarkoyft—SOLD OUT! Registration for this event is full!

1:30-3:30pm

Lightning Lectures on Yiddish History & Culture

Location: UIUC ARC Multipurpose Room 5, 201 E Peabody Dr, Champaign, IL 61820

Description: This lecture series features short talks on a variety of subjects related to Yiddish. See below for more information.

1. Anastasiia Strakhova

Jewish Emigration from Eastern Europe (1870s-1914)

Description: More than two million Jews emigrated from the Russian Empire between the 1870s-1914, many of whom came to the United States. While this is the genesis of many family histories, most don't know that between 75-90% of these departures occurred illegally. This talk will explain why Jewish emigrants had to choose a clandestine route when legal options were also available.

Speaker bio: Anastasiia Strakhova is Associate Director of the Program in Jewish Culture & Society at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. She specializes in Modern Jewish history with a concentration on Eastern Europe, particularly Ukraine, and migration.

2. Paul Weichsel

Yiddish and Translation

Speaker bio: Paul Weichsel was born in 1931 into a Yiddish (or more properly, Yinglish) speaking home in the Bronx, New York. His parents (mother from Ukraine, father from Poland) wanted nothing more than to raise their children as proper “Yenkees”. Paul’s serious interest in Yiddish began to evolve when he returned from living in Israel with his family between 1970-1972. Upon return to CU, Paul founded a Yiddish *leyenkrayz*, which lasted until 2010. He has several unpublished English translations of Yiddish literature, and a soon-to-be published set of English translations of some of the early writings of Issac Bashevis Singer.

3. Ben Schacht

Life, Labor, and Culture among Chicago's Jewish Immigrant Garment Workers (1880-1910)

Description: Using the life stories of three exemplary Jewish immigrants, this lecture explores the major events and institutions that defined Jewish immigrant life in Chicago during the turn of the twentieth century, including the Haymarket Affair, the garment industry, Maxwell Street and the Jewish ghetto, Hull House, and the labor movement.

Speaker bio: Ben Schacht is a public humanist, independent scholar, and member of the Chicago YIVO Society board.

4. Emma Lerman

Yiddish Children's Literature through Illustrations

Description: The artwork in children's books can tell us much about how children are taught to see the world. Visual storytelling can guide young readers through a period of rapid societal transformation. In this talk, we will look at examples of illustrations in works of Yiddish children's literature from the early Soviet Union. Some authors and artists treated include Mani Leyb and Leyb Kvitko as well as El Lissitzky and Issachar Ber Ryback.

Speaker bio: Emma Lerman is a PhD Candidate at the University of Michigan in the Slavic Languages and Literatures Department. She specializes in interwar Soviet children's literature with a focus on Russian and Yiddish texts.

5. Frances Harris

Klezmer Today

Description: Frances will talk about and share sound clips from the breadth and depth of today's vibrant klezmer scene. Buckle your seatbelts!

Speaker bio: Frances Harris is a retired high school librarian who has found a home in klezmer music and Yiddish culture. She is a regular attendee at Yiddish culture festivals, delights in bringing klezmer luminaries to Champaign-Urbana, and is the proud leader of C-U's Papashoy Klezmer Band.

6. Anthony Mordechai Tzvi Russell

Me'am Lo'ez: Parallels of Black and Jewish Roots Music

Description: What are the formal relationships between Ashkenazi Jewish music and music of the African diaspora? In this short lecture, with performed examples from Jewish liturgy, Spirituals and folk and art music from both traditions, we'll find out.

Speaker bio: Anthony Russell is a multidisciplinary artist working in Yiddish language and culture. The 2025-26 Mitchell J. Gerstein Distinguished Visiting Artist in Residence at the University of Toronto, Anthony has expanded his work into cultural activism in collaboration with the Workers Circle and as an essayist in a number of publications, including The Forward, Tablet Magazine and Jewish Currents.

4:00pm Kugel and Klezmer Finale Event

Location: UIUC ARC Multipurpose Room 6, 201 E Peabody Dr, Champaign, IL 61820

Description: Celebrate the festival's grand finale with a kugel cook-off and taste-off. Awards will be given, dreams will be made, and a great time will be had by all! Featuring our local Papashoy Klezmer Band and guest judges. No registration required. [Enter your kugel into the competition here.](#)