

JWST 40/HEBREW 61/"Topics in Modern Hebrew Literature:  
**Film, fiction and the Israeli-Arab conflict'**

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Office: 305 Bartlett Hall

Office hours: Tu. 1-2, Th. 1-2

### **Description**

Israeli cinema offers a powerful and esthetically distinctive set of perspectives on Israel. This course offers an in-depth study of 12 films and related fiction against a backdrop of state-building, creation of an Israeli identity, constant war, secular-religious strife, and the shadow of the Holocaust. We also ask: How has Israeli cinema evolved thematically and in filmic terms such as New Wave aesthetics, how do the film-makers see themselves, and what happens when books become movies, as in Oz's My Michael and Kaniuk's Himmo King of Jerusalem?

### **Assessment**

Four 1000 word essays (40% of the grade)

One final 4000-5000 word project (40% of the grade)

Two quizzes on Israeli cinema in general, based on Kronish's book (20% of the grade)

The essays and project are to be blitzed to me, as an attachment.

Read Kronish to extract the main points about how Israeli cinema developed, in particular the social and historical changes the films reflect -- and the changes in the artistic and ideological outlook of the filmmakers.

Aside from the details relating to our own films and their directors, ignore the details and focus on the main points.

About citing from the films in your essays, it's sufficient to name the film -- but if you have an exact time reference, how much the better.

You will also be asked, at random, to report on films you have just studied. The quality of your report may affect your final grade.

## **Viewing**

In my syllabus, the films are to be viewed by the TUESDAY of that week (unless there are two).

The reading for each week is generally to be done by the THURSDAY class within that week, for me to discuss it on that Thursday. I've deliberately left myself some flexibility on this.

However, when we come to Oz's *My Michael* and Kaniuk's *Himmo*, please note that I want you to read the novel BEFORE the film -- otherwise, the film will comander your imagination.

All the films are available for viewing as videos, on reserve in the Jones Media Center in the Berry Library (2nd floor).

## Reading

### The course pack

This can be purchased at Wheelock Books. It comprises some books and articles, including:

Kronish, Amy World Cinema: Israel, Madison [N.J.] : Fairleigh Dickinson University Press 1996

Avisar, Ilan. Israeli cinema and the ending of Zionist ideology. In F Lazin & G Mahler (eds) Israel in the Nineties., Univ Press of Florida, 153-168.

Friedman, Regine. Between silence and abjection: The film medium and the Israeli war widow. Film Historia 3(1-2) , 1993, pp. 79-89

Gertz, Nurith. From Jew to Hebrew: The Zionist "Narrative" in the Israeli Cinema of the 1940s and 1950s, Israel Affairs, (Spring 1998) 175 – 200.

Gertz, Nurith "The Impact of the Holocaust on Israeli Ideological Models," Remembering for the future (Oxford & New-York: Pergamon Press), pp. 132-139, 1988.

Gertz, Nurith. "My Michael - From Jerusalem to Hollywood via the 'Red Desert'," in: Leon Yudkin ed., Modern Hebrew Literature in English Translation (New York: Markus Wiener), 1987, pp. 139-156.

Gertz, Nurith. "A World Without Boundaries, Israeli National Identity in the Eighties as Expressed in Cinema & Literature," Discours Social/Social Discourse, 4, 3&4, (Summer-Autumn), 155-171

Ne'eman, Judd. The empty tomb in the postmodern pyramid: Israeli cinema in the 1980s and 1990s. In C Berlin (ed) Documenting Israel. Cambridge, 1985.

Ne'eman, Judd. The death mask of the moderns: A genealogy of New Sensibility cinema in Israel. Israel Studies 4:1, 1999, 100-128.

Schorr, R (1988) 40 years film-making in Israel. ARIEL 71-72: 106-127

Shaviv, Miriam. (2001). A literary blank ballot. INTERNET JERUSALEM POST, april 20, 01

Shoham, Reuven. (1997). 'Kovner vs Kovner', AJS Review 22(2): 223-242

Turner, Graeme. Film Languages. In D Graddol & O Boyd-Barrett (eds) Media Texts. Routledge., pp 119-135.

Wurmser, Meyrav. (2001) Escapism and defeat. INTERNET JERUSALEM POST, Apr 20, 01

Zertal, Edith (1977) Dan Wolman – Film-maker. Ariel 44: 88-102.

## Reserve

In addition, the following have been placed on 24-hour reserve in Baker Library:

## LITERATURE

Abramson, Glenda. The Oxford Book of Hebrew Short Stories.

Alter, R Modern Hebrew Literature. Behrman House, 1975.

Amichai, Yehuda. Not of this time, not of this place. London, Vallentine, Mitchell, 1973

Diamant, Carol (ed) Ribcage : Israeli women's fiction New York:Hadassah, 1994.

Goor, Batya. Murder on a Kibbutz. Harper, 1995

Grossman, David. The Smile of the Lamb. New York : Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1990

Kaniuk, Yoram. Himmo, King of Jerusalem. Translated from the Hebrew by Yosef Shachter. [1st ed.] New York, Atheneum, 1969

Kishon, Efraim. Unfair to Goliath. Penguin, 1971

Oz, Amos. My Michael. Fontana 1975.

Penueli, S. & A. Ukhmani. Hebrew short stories. (2 volumes), 1965

Ramras-Rauch, G. & Michman-Melkman, J. (eds), Facing the Holocaust. JPS, 1985

Sonntag, Jacob (ed.) New writing from Israel London : Corgi, 1976

Yehoshua, A.B. The Lover, Garden City, N.Y. : Doubleday, 1978

## CRITICISM

Feldhay Brenner, Rachel. 'Discourses of mourning and rebirth in post-Holocaust Israeli literature', Hebrew Studies 31, 1990, pp 71-85

Kronish, Amy World Cinema: Israel, Madison [N.J.] : Fairleigh Dickinson University Press 1996

Monaco, James. How to Read a Film. Oxford.

Sagiv, Assaf. Dionysius in Zion. Azure 9, 2000: 155-180

Shohat, Ella Israeli Cinema: East and West and the Politics of Representation, U of Texas Press, 1989

## BACKGROUND HISTORY

Barnavi, Eli. A Historical Atlas of the Jewish People. Schocken, 1992.

Bart, Mitchell . The Idiot's Guide for the Middle East Conflict.

Elon, Amos. The Israelis: Founders and Sons. Penguin 1971

Gilbert, Martin. Israel: A history. William Morrow, NY, 1998

Goldscheider, Calvin . Cultures in Conflict: the Arab-Israeli Conflict (Greenwood, 2002)

Katriel, Tamar. Communal Webs, Cambridge Univ. Press.

Kushner, Tony. 'The memory of Anne Frank', in Evans M & K Lunn (eds) War and Memory in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Berg: Oxford 1997, 3-25

Mishal, Nissim. Those were the Years. Yedioth Ahronoth, 1997.

Porat, Dan. From the Scandal to the Holocaust in Israeli Education. J of Contemporary History

Sachar, Howard M. The course of modern Jewish history. Vintage/Random House, 1990.

Schulze, Kirsten E. (1999) The Arab-Israeli Conflict (Seminar Studies in History)

<http://www.us-israel.org/jsource/History/timeline.html>

## Schedule

### **Week 1: Introduction/Early Zionist narratives**

Two overviews: The history of Modern Israel; the evolution of Israeli cinema and fiction

The film They were Ten

Smilansky Squatters Rights in Penueli Hebrew Short Stories, vol. 1, 182-191

Aricha 'Night Scene' (in Penueli & Ukhmani, vol. 2, 233-244)

Raab 'Wedding' (in Diament 20-26)

Turner, Graeme. ;'Film Languages'.

Erens, Pamela. Israeli cinema. [class hand out]

Elon, ch 6, pp 106-147

Barnavi 220-1

Ne'eman, Judd. The empty tomb... (read 117-129)

### **Week 2: The War of Independence:**

The film Hill 24 Doesn't Answer

Tammuz The Swimming Contest in The Oxford Book of Hebrew Short Stories, 127-138

Shamir's play He Walked in the Fields

Gertz. From Jew to Hebrew

Barnavi 242-245

#### ***Essay due by Blitz.***

The heroes/heroines in Zionist cinema are often subject to inner conflict and change. How far is this true of They were Ten and Hill 24 Doesn't Answer?

### **Week 3: Childhood, adolescence and a shifting set of values:**

The film Noa at 17

The film The Wooden Gun

Gur's novel Murder on a Kibbutz pp 1-47, 60-65, 156-171.

Yehoshua, A.B. 'The literature of the generation of the state'

Ne'eman, Judd. The empty tomb... (read 129-136)

Porat.

Shoham

#### ***Quiz (Kronish)***

**Week 4 The melting pot:**

Kishon's film Sallah

Kishon's satirical stories Unfair to Goliath, 'the economics of babysitting' to 'a matter of portorage'

Barnavi 254-5

***Essay due by Blitz.***

Is the film Sallah a put-down of Sephardim?

or

What are the targets of Kishon's satire in Sallah?

**Week 5: The Six Day War:**

The film Siege

Yehoshua The Last Commander in The Oxford Book of Hebrew Short Stories, 220-236

Porat A diagonal view (in Sonntag 129-137)

Friedman, Regine. Between silence and abjection

Elon, ch 9, pp. 222-255

Barnavi 260-5

**Arab and Jew**

The film Hamsin

Liebrecht: Room on the Roof in Diament 231-258

Ne'eman, Judd. The death mask of the moderns

***Quiz*****Week 6: Arab and Jew (continued)**

Amos Oz's novel My Michael

The film version of My Michael

Elon, ch 10, pp 256-289

Gertz, Nurith. "My Michael - From Jerusalem to Hollywood via the 'Red Desert'"

Zertal, Edith (1977) Dan Wolman – Film-maker. ARIEL 44: 88-102.

***Essay due by Blitz.***

Compare the techniques of fiction and film with reference to My Michael.

NB: you may find some good ideas in (a) Monaco How to read a Film, the chapters on Signs and Syntax, (b) some chapters from Murray The Cinematic Imagination

(photocopies)

**Week 7: Responses to the Holocaust:**

The film Summer of Aviya,

The film Under the Domim Tree

The film Because of that War

Megged The Name in Ramras-Rauch 21-36

Liebrecht Morning in the Park with Nannies in The Oxford Book of Hebrew Short Stories, 387-396

Ramras-Rauch, Introduction and Afterword

Feldhay Brenner, R. 'Discourses of mourning and rebirth'

Gertz, Nurith "The Impact of the Holocaust on Israeli Ideological Models"

Elon, ch. 8 'An open wound'

I'd like you to think about how the crisis in Megged's powerful story "The Name" is resolved, if that's the word -- what are the young couple and grandfather Zisskind thinking at the end, and is the outcome a viable one psychologically for them and for their society?

Also, what light does it throw on Elon Chapter 8? Note: The name of the Israeli central memorial for the Holocaust, Yad VaShem, means literally "Place and Name"

**Week 8: Demythologizing the national struggle:**

Kaniuk's novel Himmo King of Jerusalem

The film version of Himmo King of Jerusalem

The film Late Summer Blues

Schorr, R. (1988) 40 years film-making in Israel.

Katriel Communal Webs, ch. 2 on *gibbush*.

***Essay due by Blitz.***

Discuss the portrayal of the Holocaust 's impact on survivors and their families in the films and fiction you have studied.

**Week 9: Conflict in the 80s and 90s**

The film Song of the Siren

The film Cup Final

Mishal 234-240, 291-2

Avisar, Ilan. Israeli cinema and the ending of Zionist ideology.

Gertz, Nurith. "A World Without Boundaries"  
Shaviv, Miriam. A literary blank ballot  
Wurmser, Meyrav. Escapism and defeat.

***Project due by Blitz***

How do filmmakers' and authors' attitudes to the Arab-Israeli conflict vary in the films and literature you have studied?

or

'The open end has become a virtual cliché of the Israeli cinema.' (Pamela Erens) How far is this true of the films you have studied. and what might the open end seek to convey?