

MJS\_5138\_FA09 **GENDER AND FAMILY IN ISRAEL**

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Schusterman Visiting Israeli Professor**

**Fall 2009, Tuesday 10.20 – 12.10**

**Office hours: Tuesday 2-3.30 pm and by appointment**

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**Content**

For a sociologist, Israeli society is a fascinating social laboratory that "thrives on conflict" between modernity and Jewish legacies, secular and religious lifestyles, as well as multiple ethnic traditions. In no other domain do these clashes come to the fore as forcefully as in family processes and gender relations. This domain is morally charged and crucially important for most societies, but even more so for a small country still striving to survive in a hostile milieu of the Middle East. This course will help the students to understand the complex dilemmas surrounding marriage and divorce (religious vs. civil definitions), alternative family forms, childbearing, parenting, and new reproductive technologies, the so-called demographic contest between the Jewish and Palestinian populations, and the evolution of gender relations in the light of all these complexities.

**Format, assignments, and grading**

The course will merge lecturing and interactive forms of class work, such as student presentations with subsequent discussion. The *mid-term assessment* will draw on class presentations based on readings (both within and beyond the syllabus) and/or annotated bibliography for those unwilling to present.

*The final grade* will be based on the mid-term assignment (30%) plus the 8-10 pp. paper (60%) to be submitted at the last class meeting. The students should consult the professor about the topics of their papers. Attendance and readiness to participate in discussions will contribute another 10% to the final grade.

Our interactions and readings will be largely in English, with optional literature items in Hebrew and a possibility of Hebrew usage at all times.

**Recommended texts:**

Esther Fuchs (Ed.). *Israeli Women's Studies. A Reader*. New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press, 2005.

Ruth Halperin-Kaddari. *Women in Israel. A State of Their Own*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004.

Jona Schellekens and Jon Anson (Eds.) *Israel's Destiny. Fertility and Mortality in a Divided Society*. Schnitzer Studies in Israeli Society Series, Volume 12. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 2007

M.Semyonov and N.Lewin-Epstein (Eds.). *Stratification in Israel: Class, Ethnicity and Gender*. Schnitzer Studies in Israeli Society Series, Volume 10. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 2004.

### **Recommended articles:**

Katz, Ruth. Expectations of family life in a multicultural context: An Israeli example. *International Journal of Sociology of the Family*, 2002, 30(1): 1-20.

Lavee, Yoav and Katz, Ruth. The Family in Israel: Between Tradition and Modernity. *Marriage and Family Review*, 2003, 35(1/2): 193-216.

Landau, Ruth. The Promise of Post-Menopausal Pregnancy. *Social Work in Health Care*, 2004, 40(1): 53-69.

Anson, Jon and Meir, Avinoam. Religiosity, nationalism and fertility in Israel. In: J.Schellekens and J.Anson (Eds.) *Israel's Destiny. Fertility and Mortality in a Divided Society*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 2007, pp. 29-51.

Mizrachi, Beverly. Elite educational institutions and the recruitment of women into national elite positions in Israel. In: M.Semyonov and N.Lewin-Epstein (Eds.). *Stratification in Israel: Class, Ethnicity and Gender*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, pp. 349-363.

Shaley, Carmel and Goldin, Segal. The uses and misuses of in-vitro fertilization in Israel: Some sociological and ethical considerations. *Nashim: A Journal of Jewish Women's Studies and Gender Issues*. Special Issue *Women's Health, Reproduction, and Body Politics*, 2006 Fall (No 12): 151-176.

Remennick, Larissa and Hetsroni, A. Public attitudes toward abortion in Israel. A research Note. *Social Science Quarterly* 2001, 82(2): 420-431.

Remennick, Larissa. Immigration, gender, and psychosocial adjustment: A study among 150 immigrant couples in Israel. *Sex Roles* 2005, 53 (11-12): 847-864.

Remennick, Larissa. The Quest after the Perfect Baby: Why Do Israeli Women Seek Prenatal Genetic Testing? *Sociology of Health and Illness* 2006, 28(1): 21-53.

Remennick, Larissa. Contested Motherhood in the Ethnic State: Voices from an Israeli Postpartum Ward. *Ethnicities* 2008, 8(2): 199-226.

## Key Topics

**Weeks 1, 2**      **Israeli society between tradition and modernity.  
Why are gender and family issues at the core of Israel's  
political arena and social dynamics?**

**Readings:**      Halperin-Kaddari, Part I. The Legal State.

Fucks, 2005 - chapters by Hanna Herzog "Homefront and  
Battlefront..." and by Nira Yuval-Davis "Bearers of the Collective..."

Lavee, Yoav and Katz, Ruth. The Family in Israel: Between  
Tradition and Modernity. *Marriage and Family Review*, 2003,  
35(1/2):193-216.

Palgi, Michal. Gender Equality in the Kibbutz – From Ideology  
To Reality. In: Kalpana Misra and Melanie Rich (Eds). *Jewish  
Feminism in Israel*. Brandeis University Press, 2003, pp. 76-95.

**Week 3**            **Women in Israeli politics, in the military and their participation  
in the national Elites**

**Readings:**      Halperin Kaddari, 2004 - Part II. Progress and the Limits of the Law.  
Chapters 7,8

Fucks, 2005 - chapters by Hanna Herzog " Homefront and  
Battlefront...", Tamar Mayer "From Zero to Hero: Masculinity in  
Jewish Nationalism" and Orna Sasson-Levy "Gender Performance in  
the Changing Military"

Mizrachi, Beverly. Elite Educational Institutions and the  
Recruitment of Women into National Elite Positions in Israel.  
In: M.Semyonov and N.Lewin-Epstein (Eds.). *Stratification in  
Israel: Class, Ethnicity and Gender*. NJ: Transaction.

**Weeks 4, 5**      **The spectrum of Israeli families: Between traditional  
families (Arab Hamula, Haredi family) and same-sex couples**

**Readings:**      Anson, Jon and Meir, Avinoam. Religiosity, Nationalism and  
Fertility in Israel. In: J. Schellekens and J. Anson (Eds.) *Israel's Destiny.  
Fertility and Mortality in a Divided Society*. NJ: Transaction, 2007.

Fucks, 2005 – Chapter by Tamar El-Or "Paradoxes and Social Boundaries..."  
and Susan Sered "The Ritualized Body..."

Katz, Ruth. Expectations of family life in a multicultural context: An Israeli  
example. *International Journal of Sociology of the Family*, 2002, 30(1): 1-20.

Remennick, Larissa. Immigration, gender, and psychosocial adjustment: A study among 150 immigrant couples in Israel. *Sex Roles* 2005, 53 (11-12): 847-864.

**Week 6 Legal and ethical dilemmas around Jewish marriage and divorce**

**Readings:** Halperin-Kaddari, 2004 – Part III Chapter 11 "The Halachic Trap: Marriage and Family Life"  
Fuchs, 2005: Chapter by Nira Yuval-Davis "Bearers of the Collective"  
Lavee, Yoav and Katz, Ruth. The Family in Israel: Between Tradition and Modernity. *Marriage and Family Review*, 2003, 35(1/2):193-216.

**Week 7 Israeli familism and pronatalism: Causes and implications**

**Readings:** Remennick, Larissa. Contested Motherhood in the Ethnic State: Voices from an Israeli Postpartum Ward. *Ethnicities* 2008, 8(2): 199-226.

Remennick, L. and Hetsroni, A. Public attitudes toward abortion in Israel. A research Note. *Social Science Quarterly* 2001, 82(2): 420-431.

Fuchs, 2005: Nira Yuval-Davis "Bearers of the Collective"

**Weeks 8, 9 A baby at any cost: New reproductive technologies in Israel**

**Readings:** Shalev, Carmel and Goldin, Segal. The uses and misuses of in-vitro fertilization in Israel: Some sociological and ethical considerations. *Nashim: A Journal of Jewish Women's Studies and Gender Issues*. Special Issue *Women's Health, Reproduction, and Body Politics*, 2006 Fall (No 12): 151-176.

Birenbaum-Carmeli, Daphna. Reproductive Policy in Context: Implications on Women's Rights in Israel, 1945-2000. *Policy Studies*, 2003, 24 (2-3): 101-113.

Remennick, Larissa. The Quest after the Perfect Baby: Why Do Israeli Women Seek Prenatal Genetic Testing? *Sociology of Health and Illness* 2006, 28(1): 21-53.

Remennick, Larissa. Between reproductive citizenship and consumerism: Attitudes towards assisted reproductive technologies (ART) among Jewish and Arab Israeli Women. Forthcoming in D. Birenbaum-Carmeli and Y. Carmeli (eds.) *Kin, Gene, and Community: Reproductive Technologies among Jewish Israelis* (Praeger) – available on request from the author.

**Week 10 Demographic Contest between Jews and Arabs: Myth or Reality?**

**Readings:** Remennick, L. Contested Motherhood in the Ethnic State: Voices from an Israeli Postpartum Ward. *Ethnicities* 2008, 8(2): 199-226.

Anson and Meir, in Transaction volume, 2007

**Weeks 11-12** Student presentations in class (may be either scattered over classes or concentrated during the last two sessions)