

WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF RELIGION
SPRING 2008

Identity, History and Culture in Israeli Cinema

Dr. Miri Talmon-Bohm

Office: RSC # 211

Office hours: Thursdays, 1 PM and by appointment

Office telephone extension #5788

E-Mail: mtalmonbohm@wesleyan.edu

Class meets on Tuesdays, 07:00 pm-9:50 pm

At SC 121 (science center)

You can look it up: www.wesleyan.edu/classrooms/database.htm

Course Description:

The course illuminates trends and processes in Israeli cultural history and in current Israeli society, as represented in Israeli films from the 1960s to present day Israel. Topics include diverse aspects of Israeli society and culture: history and collective memory, formation and negotiations of national identity, ethnicities in relation to politics and the experience of immigration, wars, terror, the peace process and their impact on Israeli culture, the Holocaust and Israeli consciousness, Israelis in their spatial Mediterranean/Middle-Eastern context and the new agenda in Israeli culture as reflected in recent Israeli Cinema. Screenings of Israeli films are a central part of the course. Films from present day Israel, including the most recent, as well as from earlier decades, create the ideological and cultural universe that the course illuminates.

Required Texts (Bibliography)

The course reader is an anthology of articles and book chapters written by scholars of Israeli cinema and culture, especially selected and compiled for this course. These sources deal with central topics of our discussion, different decades in Israeli cultural and cinematic history, and present various theoretical approaches to the study of film, cultural history, social and ideological processes. The reader can be purchased at "It's Only Natural", the store, on Main street, marketplace. Electronic versions of all sources will be available through the Olin Library Reserve.

In addition, relevant textbooks, reference books and journals which have devoted special issues to the topic of Israeli Cinema will be available in the library. A list of the relevant sources is attached to the course syllabus, titled: Appendix: Selected Bibliography.

The Internet Movie Data Base refers you to films, directors, producers, cast, year of production, awards, synopsis and reviews. You can find the necessary information about the films we discuss, and others you are curious about, and add your own reviews.

www.imdb.com

Course Requirements

Our unique encounter with Israeli culture is mediated by films especially selected to convey the Israeli experience. Students are urged and expected to attend all classes and screenings (that are incorporated into classes). In addition, students are encouraged to attend screenings of Israeli films on the Israeli Film Festival at Wesleyan.

Attendance and Participation in class comprises 40 percent of the course grade. Missing no more than one class is a pre-requisite for the final.

The final assignment in the course is an analysis of one or more Israeli films, according to a topic you choose to discuss. There should be references in the final paper to at least two articles or book chapters from the course reader, relevant to your topic of discussion. The course syllabus provides examples of topics you can choose to discuss and illustrate in one or more films. If you wish to discuss another topic, you are most welcome to discuss creative alternatives with me.

The final paper should be submitted on the last meeting in class, no later than May 6th, 2008. This final paper should be 6-8 pages long. It comprises 40% of your grade.

In addition, each student will write at least one critical essay or critique of an Israeli film presented in class, 2 pages long. This short essay should focus on your viewing experience of a film that was especially impressive/ meaningful/ surprising/ annoying/ enjoyable to you (of the films screened and discussed in class). Students are invited to share this critique with the class and present it orally as well. Your essay should be submitted no later than March 6, 2008, and it comprises 20% of the grade.

Course Requirements-summary

1. Attendance, participation and keeping up with reading and viewing: 40%
2. Two page essay of film critique: 20%, no later than March 6 2008.
3. Final Paper: 40% (to be submitted by May 6 2008, 6-10 pages).

Class Syllabus: Topics, reading assignments, screenings.

Our class meets every Tuesday, 7-9:50 pm. Each meeting is devoted to a full length film viewing, preceded by a pre-viewing introduction and followed by a discussion, with additional film excerpts. It is highly recommended to keep up with the reading materials according to the order of their appearance in the syllabus, since each article assigned on a specific date is relevant to the screening and lecture in the immediately following class.

1. Introduction: Israeli Society in a nutshell

On the Frontline (Documentary, Chanoch Zeevi, 2003)

Israel Our Home, from the Documentary series **Did Hertzl Really Say That?** (Ido Bahat, 2007)

Channels of Rage (Anat Halachmi 2003)

Black over White (The Idan Reichel Project) Tomer Heyman, 2008

These documentary films offer insiders' perspectives at Israeli society in all of its diversity and uniqueness. In the first film, 18 something young Israelis, on a one year national service in Jerusalem, examine and negotiate their Israeli identity, their attitudes to religion, left and right wing politics, Zionism, Ethnicities, commitment to the nation, tolerance, ideals, war and peace, and life under terror. The second and third films negotiate what being an Israeli means to Arab Israelis and immigrants to Israel from the former Soviet Union. The fourth film documents the journey of Israeli musician Idan Reichel and his project to Ethiopia, and negotiates identity issues of Israelis who came from Ethiopia.

The first class is devoted to a general introduction to Israeli society and culture.

READER:

Regev, Motti & Seroussi, Edwin: "A Short Introduction to Israeli Culture", *Popular Music and National Culture in Israel*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004. pp. 15-25

Talmon, Miri. (2005) "Popular Culture, Israeli" in: Abramson, Glenda. ed, *Encyclopedia of Modern Jewish Culture, Vol. 2*, Routledge-Taylor & Francis, pp. 686-693.

2. From Pioneers to Settlers: National Narratives revisited

The construction of national identity in a historical perspective

2.1 Changing narratives of the Zionist Enterprise. Excerpts:

This is the Land (Agadati, 1933)

They Were Ten (Dinar, 1960)

A Hole in the Moon (Zohar, 1964)

Once We Were Dreamers (Barbash, 1987)

Saint Clara (Folman, 1995)

2.2. The settlers and the nationalist Israeli right: Insiders' cinematic perspectives

Nadia's Friends, (Chanoch Zeevi, 2006)

Time of Favor, (Joseph Cedar, 2001)

Campfire (Joseph Cedar, 2003)

READER:

Segev, Tom. (tr. Haim Watzman) "The Real Zionists are Us". *Elvis in Jerusalem* Metropolitan Books, New York, 2001, pp 81-112.

Talmon Miri. "Introduction: A State of Becoming: Transitions in Israeli Culture 1990-2000" (personal manuscript, 2007)

3. The Transparent Yarmulka: Israelis and their Judaism

Excerpts:

Did Hertzl Really Say That- Transparent Kippa, Ido Bahat, 2005 **Green**

Chariot, Gilad Goldschmidt, 2006, **Searching for Leaven** Karnit Mendel, 2007,

Say Amen David Deri, 2005

FILM: **The Schwartz Dynasty** (Hasfari and Hasfari, 2005)

READER:

Talmon, Miri. "Paradigms of Youth and Collective Identity in Israeli Popular Culture". In: Ralph, s. et al. eds. *Youth and the Global Media*, Luton, UK: University of Luton Press, 1999, pp. 219-228.

Talmon, Miri. Nostalgia and the End of the Millennium: a 'Now Denial' or a Re-Make of the Past". In: Friedman, Gertz, Lubin and Ne'eman, eds. *Blurred Boundaries- Studies in Cinema and Television. Assaph, Section D, No. 1*. Tel-Aviv University: Faculty of the Arts, Department of Film and Television. 1998, pp. 219-231.

4. The Israeli Generation X: The war in Lebanon, Nostalgia and Retro, the pacifist 1990s discourse and the peace process- the impact of the 20+ generation on current Israeli politics.

FILM: **The Wisdom of the Pretzel (Bagel Wisdom)** (Ilan Heitner, 2002)

Additional Excerpts: **Aviv**, Tomer Heyman, 2003; **Out for Love, Be Back Shortly**, Dan Katzir, 1997; **Song of the Siren** (Fox, 1994) **Something Sweet**, (Turgemann, 2004).

READER:

Ben-Shaul, Nitzan. "Israeli Cinema: Inter-ethnic Tensions among Israeli Jews and the Notion of Besiegement". *Kosmorama* # 237, The Danish Film Institute, 2006.

Shohat, Ella. "From Orientalism to Bourekas" Chapter 3 in: *Israeli Cinema: East/West and the Politics of Representation* Austin: University of Texas Press, 1989, pp. 124-155.

5. Ethnicities in Israel

5.1 Ethnicity, popular Israeli cinema and the "Melting Pot" utopia

The "Bourekas" popular Genre. Excerpts: **Katz and Karasso** (Menachem Golan, 1971) **Charly and a Half** (Boaz Davidson, 1974)

5.2 . Ethnicity and Politics in Israel

FILM: **Shuly's Fiance** (Doron Tzabari, 1997)

Excerpts: **Sallah** (Efraim Kishon, 1964); **Fortuna** (Menahem Golan, 1966)

READER:

Talmon, Miri. (2005). "The End of a World, The Beginning of a New World: Ethnicity, Gender and Memory in *Turn Left at the End of the World*", an article presented at the 21st annual conference of The Association for Israel Studies, Tucson, Arizona, May 2005.

Loshitzky, Yosefa. "Introduction: Hybrid Victims". pp. xi-xvii."Conclusion", pp. 169-171. In: *Identity Politics on the Israeli Screen*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001.

Loshitzky, Yossefa, "Authenticity in Crisis: *Sh'chur* and new Israeli forms of ethnicity" *Media, Culture & society*, Vol. 18, Sage, London, 1996, pp. 87-103.

6. From "Melting Pot" to Multiculturalism: The new discourse of ethnicity, immigration and absorption; The role of biography, second generation discourse, the re-vision of history and privatization of collective memory; the new Diasporic discourse; the impact of Globalization.

Excerpts:

Sallah, (Ephraim Kishon, 1964);
Sh'chur (Hasfari, 1994)
Yana's Friends (Kaplun, 1998)
The Schwartz Dynasty (Hasfari and Hasfari, 2005)
To Take a Wife (Elkabetz and Elkabetz, 2004)
Late Marriage (Kososhvily, 2001)
What a Wonderful Place (Halfon, 2005)
Live and Become (Mihaileanu, 2005)

FILM: **Turn Left at the End of the World** (Avi Nesher, 2004)

READER

Kedem, Eldad. "Kibbutz, Cinema, History" (pp. 28-34; "**Sweet Mud** and Thought Without an Image" (pp. 209-226) in *The Kibbutz and Israeli Cinema: Deterritorializing, Representation, and Ideology*. University of Amsterdam, Dissertation, 2007.

7. "The Kibbutz" as metaphor for changing ideologies and agendas in Israeli society

They Were Ten (Dinar, 1961)
Once We Were Dreamers (Barbash, 1987)
He Walked Through the Fields (Milo, 1968)
Noa at Seventeen (Yeshurun, 1981)
Atalia (Tevet, 1984)
Sweet Mud (Shaul, 2006)

READER:

Nocke, Alexandra. "Israel and the Emergence of Mediterranean Identity: Expressions of Locality in Music and Literature" *Israel Studies, Volume 11, number 1*, Indiana University Press, pp. 143-173.

Zanger , Anat. "Zionism and the Detective: Imaginary territories in Israeli popular cinema of the 1960s" *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies Vol 3 No. 3* November 2004, pp. 307-317

8. The Family, The New Israelis and the Mediterranean alternative: changing attitudes to the Middle-Eastern space and to Israeli identity; The Feminization of Israeli Agenda, as articulated in Shemi Zarhin's films:

Bonjour Monsieur Shlomi (HaKochavim shell Shlomi, ie: Shlomi's Stars) Shemi Zarhin, 2003.
Aviva My Love (Shemi Zarhin, 2006)

READER:

Avisar, Ilan. "Personal Fears and National Nightmares: The Holocaust Complex in Israeli Cinema". in: Efraim Sicher, ed. *Breaking Crystal: Writing and Memory after Auschwitz*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1998. pp. 137-159.

Gertz, Nurith. "Gender and Nationality in the New Israeli Cinema". in: Friedman, R.M, Gertz, N., Lubin, O and Ne'eman, J., eds. *Kolnoa-Assaph, Section D, No.2*. Ramat Aviv: Tel Aviv University, Faculty of Arts, Department of Film and Television. pp. 227-238.

9. The Holocaust and Israeli Consciousness

9.1 Israeli culture of cohesiveness and the Holocaust survivor -and woman- as "other".

FILM: **The Summer of Aviya (Eli Cohen, 1988)**

Excerpts: **Alex in Love** (Davidzon, 1986) , **He Walked through the fields** (Milo, 1968), **The Wooden Gun** (Moshenzon, 1979).

9.2 The Holocaust, collective memory and Israeli attitudes to terror and war

FILM: **Walk on Water** (Eytan Fox, 2004)

Excerpts: **Hill 24 Doesn't Answer** (Dickinson, 1954); **The Wooden Gun** (Moshinzon, 1979); **Operation Thunderbolt** (Golan, 1976); **MADE IN ISRAEL** (Ari Folman, 2001) **Metallic Blues** (Varta, 2004)

READER:

Gertz, Nurith, "A Different Perception of Space: Israeli Literature and Cinema in the 1980s" (chapter 6, pp. 109-120). "A Different Perception of Time" (chapter 7, pp. 121-134) in: *Myths in Israeli Culture: Captives of a Dream*. London & Portland OR: Vallentine Mitchell, 2000.

10. The Arab/Palestinian-Israeli conflict as an intercultural encounter

Oriental (Avi Neshet, 2004)

Avanti Popolo (Rafi Bukai, 1987)

Fictitious Marriage (Haim Bouzaglo, 1988)

The Band's Visit (Eran Kolirin, 2007)

READER:

Talmon, Miri. " *Here, There and Nowhere: Representations of Space and the Negotiation of Identity in Israeli Cinema and Television of the 1990s*". In: P. Carmignani and T. Jappy, eds. **Cahiers de L'université de Perpignan, No. 32:**

Arts et Identité Regionale. Presses Universitaires de Perpignan, 2001, pp. 187-204.

Zanger, Anat. "Filming National Identity: War and Women in Israeli Cinema". In: Lomsky-Feder, E. and Ben-Ari, E. eds. *The Military and Militarism in Israeli Society*, State University of New York Press, 1999, pp. 261-279.

11. Changing Paradigms of Masculinity, Militarism, the peace process: the feminization of Israeli agenda and transgression of gender boundaries

Excerpts: **Every Bastard a King (Zohar, 1968); Yossi and Jagger (Fox, 2002); Gotta Have Heart (Fox, 1997) Bonjour Monsieur Shlomi (Zarhin, 2003).**

12 Living at war, living in conflict, living with terror:
Late Summer Blues (Renen Schorr, 1987) Frozen Days (Danny Lerner, 2006)
The Bubble (Eitan Fox, 2006),

READER:

Talmon, Miri. (2006) "Cameras in Contested Territories: Personal Documentary Films and Transformations in Collective Israeli Identity". An article presented at the Association for Israel Studies' annual conference at the University of Calgary, Alberta, Canada, May 2006.

13. Personal films, collective identity: the privatization of Israeli history and personalization of identity discourse, the return of the repressed Jew/feminine.

FILMS: **Say Amen (David Deri, 2005). Ever Shot Anyone? (Michal Aviad, 1995); First Lesson in Peace (Yoram Honig, 2005) For My Children (Michal Aviad, 2002) Out for Love Love, Be Back Shortly (Dan Katzir, 1997) Another Land (Amit Goren, 1998) Le Grand Akshan (Goldman, 2003)**

SUBMISSION OF FINAL PAPER: MAY 6, 2008, by 7 pm.

Appendix: Selected bibliography for further reading and reference.

Ben-Shaul, Nitzan. "The Euphoric Decade" In: *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies*, Volume 4, Number 2. London: Taylor & Francis Group, July 2005: pp. 233-242.

Gertz, Nurith. *Myths in Israeli Culture: Captives of a Dream*. London & Portland OR: Vallentine Mitchell, 2000.

*Olin reserve Desk: call # DS 113.3.647 2000

Gertz, Nurith et al. guest editors. *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies (online) Volume 24, Number 1, Special Issue: Israeli Cinema*, Fall 2005. Purdue, Indiana: Purdue University Press.

Katriel, Tamar. *Communal Webs: Communication and Culture in Contemporary Israel*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991.

*Olin reserve desk, call # p 92 I 79 K 38 1991

Loshitzky, Yosefa. *Identity Politics on the Israeli Screen*. Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 2001.

*Olin reserve desk call # pn 1993.5 I 86 L 37 2002

Nocke, Alexandra. "Israel and the Emergence of Mediterranean Identity: Expressions of Locality in Music and Literature" *Israel Studies*, Volume 11, number 1, Indiana University Press, pp. 143-173.

Regev, Motti and Seroussi, Edwin. *Popular Music and National Culture in Israel*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004.

*Olin reserve desk, call # ML 3502 I 75 R 44 2004

Shohat, Ella. *Israeli Cinema: East/West and the Politics of Representation* Austin: University of Texas Press, 1989.

*Olin reserve desk, call # pn 1993.5 I 86 S 56 1989.

Shohat, Ella. "Master Narrative/ Counter Readings: The Politics of Israeli Cinema." In: Sklar, Robert and Musser, Charles, eds. *Resisting Images: Essays on Cinema and History*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990. p. 251-278.