

University of Nebraska at Omaha
Department of English
Fall 2014
Assaf Gavron

Office: ASH 200D
Phone: 402-554-3175
E-Mail: gavron@gmail.com
Office Hours: Tuesday 16:30-17:30
or by appointment

**ENGL 4960 / FLNG 3530 / HIST 4910 / INTL 4140:
Israeli Literature in War
Reflecting and reflected by wars: Israeli fiction from
1950s onwards**

Tuesday, 6:00-8:40 PM
Classroom: ASH 202

Course Description

This course will analyze fiction, non-fiction, and some films from the dramatic 1940's and 1950's in Israel. This analysis includes the period after the end of the Second World War and The Holocaust, the last years of the British Mandate, the Independence and formation of the state of Israel in 1948, and in the "young Israel", and through the wars of 1956, 1967 and 1973. Finally, it will touch on contemporary Israel and its current struggle with the Palestinians, as reflected in contemporary literature.

The course will explore questions of identity, nationalism, Zionism and war. (In addition we will also) ~~The course will also~~ examine the questions of perspective and memory, ~~in~~ by studying ~~examining~~ books both from the actual time period and those written in the following decades ~~after~~ ~~both~~ from the perspectives of the "inside" and the "outside", as well as in ~~and in~~ fiction, non-fiction and film.

Class Goals

By the end of this class, students are expected to:

- Acquire an understanding of Israel's geography, history, and struggles over the last 70 years, and a general knowledge of the important literature published at this time.
- Understand the major issues ~~dealt by~~ Israeli society dealt with in this period and the way the different generations of writers tackle ~~them~~ these issues in fiction.
- Develop and enhance writing and critical skills through assignments and essays.

Required Texts

Reading list (on page 4-5) available on reserve in the library and excerpts of required readings will be available electronically. No need to purchase any books. Texts will include short stories or chapters from novels, in most cases translated from Hebrew into English.

Grade Scale

A+	100+	B+	88-90	C+	78-80	D+	68-70
A	95-100	B	84-87	C	74-77	D	64-67
A-	91-94	B-	81-83	C-	71-73	F	> 64

Academic Integrity

All students at the University of Nebraska at Omaha are expected to conduct their academic affairs in an honest, forthright and responsible manner. To falsify the results of one's research, to steal the words or ideas of another, or to cheat on an examination corrupts the essential process by which knowledge is advanced. Acts of academic dishonesty include but are not limited to: plagiarism (using the ideas, words, or works of another person without crediting the source), cheating, assisting others in the act of cheating, false use or receipt of academic research materials, submitting the work of another as one's own, and altering academic records.

Special Needs

If you have any special needs (i.e. learning disability, visual or hearing impairment, or medical condition) that you believe I need to be aware of, please contact me after class or at my office so that I may help in arranging accommodations.

Classroom Etiquette

Please show respect to this class and your fellow students by turning off or silencing cell phones and pagers during class time.

All of you are expected to arrive in class on time and to avoid leaving the class during lectures, discussions, and other activities. Coming into or leaving the class while it is in session is very disruptive and signifies disrespect to your instructor and fellow students. If you are more than 10 minutes late, please do not enter the classroom. If you need to leave ahead of time, make sure to notify me before the beginning of class and sit as close as possible to the door. Late arrival and early departure may result in loss of participation credit points. Disruptive behavior may also result in deduction of points from your credit.

Class Format, Requirements and Grade Distribution

General requirements:

- ◆ Attend faithfully
- ◆ Come to class having read assigned material
- ◆ Be prepared to talk about the texts
(Please let me know if you are having problems or need help)

Grading

The grade evaluation will be based on the following:

- 1) Reading of assignments by the date on which they are to be discussed. We will spend time discussing the texts. This will be fruitful only if you arrive at class having read the assigned works, thought about them, and are ready to contribute to class discussions.
Attendance and class participation is worth 20% of your grade.
- 2) Pending on number of students, one-page responses to the readings will be required weekly, alternating between students.
This will be worth 20% of your grade.
- 3) An extended 6-7 page paper on a topic you choose (and is approved) will be required once throughout the semester, and **will be worth 30% of your grade.**
- 4) A term paper, consisting of a 6-7 page book review on one of the books or writers discussed, emphasizing a topic of your choice (that is approved), **will be worth 30% of your grade.** The students will present their papers to the class in the last class, December 9th.

Important dates to remember:

- **October 7** Due date to notify me about your extended paper topic
- **October 21** Deadline for submission of extended paper electronically
- **November 25** Due date to notify me about your term paper topic
- **December 9** Deadline for submission of term paper electronically

Tentative Schedule of Classes

Week One Introduction – Israel's Literature in War

Tuesday, 8/26/14:

Course overview, Reading materials, Assignments and technical issues.

Oz Almog – “The Sabra”

Week Two The New Jewish Hero

Tuesday, 9/2/14:

The Founding Generation (Dor HaPalmach)

Moshe Shamir – “He walked through the Fields” (novel)

Week Three War heroes on screen

Tuesday, 9/9/14:

“He Walked through the Fields” (film) and the representation of the Zionist/Sabra hero.

Week Four The Other Side of war

Tuesday, 9/16/14:

Historical background of the war of Independence – “Nakba” and the Palestinian narrative.

Other points of view – cracks in the sabra character?

S. Yizhar – “Khirbet khizeh”

Week Five “Generation of the State” Writers

Tuesday, 9/23/14:

Different sensibilities – Amos Oz's early short stories: “The Trappist Monastery”, “Way of the Wind”, and “Nomads and Viper.”

Week Six Fantasy, reality and insanity, and the role of war in each

Tuesday, 9/30/14:

Amos Oz – “My Michael” (film)

Fantasy and reality, dreams and actions.

The role of war.

Week Seven Amos Oz's My Michael's novel version

Tuesday, 10/07/14:

How the different wars are depicted in the novel and in the film (in the book 1956, in the movie 1967)

Amos Oz – “My Michael” (novel)

Week Eight Reaching Independence after war

Tuesday, 10/14/14:

Phenomenal success and cult status – the reasons.

The Sabra's transformation

Amos Oz – “A Tale of Love and Darkness”

Week Nine Another voice, another war

Tuesday, 10/28/14:

The Lover: Love and War. Significance and symbolism and role of War – violence as the only way out for futile, lost, lonely characters.

A. B. Yehoshua – “The Lover and his short stories”

Week Ten Yehoshua on the screen

Tuesday, 11/04/14:

Film V novel; adult V children; love V war.

A. B. Yehoshua – “Three Days and a Boy” (film)

Week Eleven The View from Outside – part 1 (film)

Tuesday, 11/11/14:

A foreign take on the War of Independence, the founding of Israel, the Sabra character etc. – how does it differ?

Leon Uris: “Exodus” (film, part 1)

Week Twelve The View from Outside – Part 2 (book)

Tuesday, 11/18/14:

Book and film – continuing the discussion: is Paul Newman the real sabra?

Leon Uris: “Exodus” (film, part 2; book)

Week Thirteen Contemporary wars

Tuesday, 11/25/14:

The Intifada and the conflict with the Palestinians, and how (or whether) literature deals with it.

Assaf Gavron – “Almost Dead”

Week Fourteen The view from here and now

Tuesday, 12/02/14:

How young Jewish American interpret the sabra

“Don't mess with the Zohan” (film)

Week Fifteen Wrapping up and student presentations

Tuesday, 12/09/14:

Summary of the course, student presentations