Israel’s Changing Collective Identity

MW: 9:30am-10:45am
Meyer Hall, room 157

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Aims of Course and Content
The course focuses on Israel’s changing collective identity from the early 1950s when Ben Gurion tried to mold a diverse immigrant population into a homogeneous, modern secular Jewish society to the multi-cultural Israeli society of today. Whereas Ben Gurion excluded the Israeli Arabs and ultra-Orthodox Jews both these groups are fighting today for a place in mainstream Israeli life which they hope to change. The course focuses on the myth of the “Sabra”; the difficult absorption of Jewish immigrants from Arab lands, and their subsequent search for cultural roots and a more assertive political identity; the exclusion of the ultra-Orthodox and Israeli Arabs and their present role in contemporary Israeli society; the messianism of religious Zionism after 1967; and the impact of Ethiopian and Russian immigrants on Israel’s collective identity. In addition, attention is given to the impact of globalization and the “Americanization” of Israeli society.

Course Requirements
You are expected to read all assignments before coming to class. All articles can be found on “Blackboard” (classes.nyu.edu). You are expected to attend and participate in class discussions. There will be a mid term and final exam. You will have to write one short paper based on one of the topics in the course. More details will follow on the paper and exams.

Grading is as follows:

- Participation: 10%
- Midterm exam: 30%
- Paper: 20%
- Final exam: 40%
Office hours are MW 11-12am (51 Washington Square South, Room 415 (212 998 3621). You can always contact me via email (lazin@bgu.ac.il) and I will call you back. You are also welcome to visit/consult with me whenever I am in my office.

**Reading List**

**Week 1: Israeli Society - Basic Facts, Major Characteristics and the Political Context**


**Week 2+3+4: The Non Religious Jewish Veteran Subculture**


**Week 5: The Kibbutz Subculture**


**Week 6: The Immigrants from the Former Soviet Union Subculture**


Week 7: The National Religious Jews (the Knitted Kipa) Subculture


Week 8: The Ultra Orthodox Jews Subculture


Week 9: The Ethiopian Jews Subculture


Week 10: The Druze Subculture


Week 11 + 12: The Israeli Arabs Subculture


Week 13: Becoming Americans, Europeans or Mediterranean's? The Future of Israel's Dominant Culture