WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF RELIGION
SPRING 2008

Identity, History and Culture in Israeli Cinema

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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%
3. Final Paper: 40% (to be submitted by May 6 2008, 6-10 pages).
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:**


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:**


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. 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)

READER:


5. Ethnicities in Israel
5.1 Ethnicity, popular Israeli cinema and the “Melting Pot” utopia

5.2 . Ethnicity and Politics in Israel
FILM: Shuly's Fiance (Doron Tzabari, 1997)
Excerpts: Sallah (Efraim Kishon, 1964); Fortuna (Menahem Golan, 1966)

READER:


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  

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:  


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:  

Aviva My Love (Shemi Zarhin, 2006)
READER:


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:

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

Oriental (Avi Nesher, 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:


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).


READER:


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


SUBMISSION OF FINAL PAPER: MAY 6, 2008, by 7 pm.
Appendix: Selected bibliography for further reading and reference.


*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.

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

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


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