Lewis Glinert, Dartmouth College
Israeli Culture: A Survey

Description

This course is a survey of Israeli-Jewish culture in the broad sense of the word. We study major themes and forms in Israeli literature, film, popular music, language and public ritual – setting them in social-historical context, with particular attention to the construction of cultural meaning in an emerging Jewish state. In seeking to build a society on a radically self-reliant, secular Jewish self-image, Israelis have created a culture that is a complex interplay of traditional Jewish cultures, Middle Eastern, Western and Eastern European themes and forms, as well as features that are uniquely Israeli -- all this against a backdrop of war, secular-religious strife, and the Holocaust. We will first study the construction of a Zionist collective memory and a Hebrew culture in the pre-State period, producing new rituals and communal forms, notably Tel Hai, Masada, the Sabra, the Kibbutz, and a folk music and literature celebrating landscape, labor, and Biblical memory. The 50s and 60s saw a mounting preoccupation with the Other (Ashkenazi and Sephardi, Jew and Arab), along with a transformation of folk traditions. The arts of the last three decades reflect a rapid Westernization -- with a disenchantment with Zionist ideals and a turning from national to personal existential concerns -- and a reappropriation of Middle Eastern forms. The traumas of Saddam’s Scuds and Arab terror are reflected in a sombre, vacuous cultural mood, reinforced by the murder of Yitzhak Rabin, who has been memorialized by an album of popular songs which you will study in depth.

No knowledge of Hebrew is required.

Books referred to in this syllabus:

Bermant, Chaim. *What's the joke? A study of Jewish humor through the ages*.

Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1986.

Basic Books (rev.ed.), 1999
Mintz, Alan & Anne Golomb Hoffman (eds) *A Book that was Lost and other Stories by S Y Agnon*. Schocken 1995.
Shemer, Naomi. *Simaney Derekh*. (3 CDs)
Yehoshua, A.B. *Mr.Man*.
Audio materials are available on campus on the Dartmouth Jewish Sound Archive (www.dartmouth.edu/~djsa) or from Paddock Music Library.

Poetry indicated as ‘online’ is to be found at Israel - Poetry International Web: http://israel.poetryinternationalweb.org/piw_cms/cms/cms_module/index.php?obj_id=12
Syllabus

1. Culture and memory

Reading
Geertz, ch. 1
Gans, new introduction, 1-26
Zerubavel, ch. 1 (3-12)

2. Historical background: Sephardim, Ashkenazim and their Diaspora culture

Reading
Primary sources
Noy, foreword and introduction; 5-7, 113-117, 179-182.
Schwartz, 35-48, 349-354, 683-4
Berdyczewski Without Hope in Abramson, 28-39
Bialik, At Twilight, in Carmi, 509-10
Bialik, On the Slaughter, in Carmi, 512
Secondary sources
Elon, Foreword and ch 1-4 (3-81)
Goldberg, Introduction to Goldberg, Sephardi and Middle Eastern Jewries
Alter, 1-12
Listening Tongue of Tongues, BBC Radio documentary, 1991

3. 1880-1948 -- the construction of a Yishuv culture

Reading:
Primary sources
Shalev, Meir. The Blue Mountain [novel]
Hazaz The Sermon (Alter 267-287)
Shenhar Israel Zvi (Penueli, 2, 9-15)
Shaham Inside the Room (Penueli, 2, 138-150)
Secondary sources
Elon, ch 5-6 (82-147)
Morag, Shelomo ‘The emergence of Modern Hebrew’. In Glinert 208-221
Harshav, 81-88, 104-112, 115-119, 133-152
Zerubavel, ch. 2 (13-36), ch. 3 (39-47), ch. 6 (79-95)
Schweid, 198-208

Listening  Bracha Zfirah: Shne shoshanim;  Adarim
         “Songs of the Defenders of Israel” (album)
Viewing   They Were Ten

4. Judaism refashioned or preserved

Reading:

Primary sources
Agnon  Agunot  in Mintz & Hoffman 33-47
Ratosh  The Soul Of, in Carmi,  544-6
Gilboa Isaac;  Moses in Carmi,  560-1
Zelda  Then my Soul Cried Out, in Carmi,  557
Amihai in Poems of Jerusalem and Love Poems 139-143

Secondary sources
Liebman and Don-Yehiya, 25-80
Aini, Lea. ‘Not only spiritual leaders, but also the moon can teach Bible’.
Zerubavel, ch.4 (48-59), ch 7 (96-113)

Listening:  Naomi Zuri: Folkdances of Israel (album)
Viewing:  Ushpizin

5. Early statehood: New rituals and communal forms

Reading:

Primary sources
Shamir, M  He Walked Through the Fields
Guri  Heritage, in Carmi, 565
Kovner  My sister  in Carmi, 563-4

Secondary sources
Elon, ch 9-1 (222-289)
Ben-Rafael  ‘The Kibbutz in the 1950s; A transformation of identity’ in Troen & Lucas, 265-278
Spicehandler  ‘The fiction of the “Generation in the Land”’ in Troen & Lucas, 313-329

Viewing: Noa at 17
Listening: Shir haPalmach; Re’ut; Hey daroma; Shir eres negbi; Mul har Sinai; Hayu leylot

6. **In the shadow of the Holocaust: bonding a society of immigrants**

Reading:

Primary sources

Appelfeld, A. *Kitty* in Spicehandler, 219-248
Amihai, *My father: Out of Three or Four in a Room; Half the people; The city in which I was born*, in Carmi 568-572
Pagis *Written in Pencil* in Carmi 575
Greenberg *The Severing of a Wing*, in Carmi 531-2
Liebrecht *Morning in the Park with Nannies* in Abramson 387-96

Secondary sources

Shaked, *The Shadows Within*, pp 145-180
Katriel, *Communal webs*, 11-34, 51-70, 151-166

Viewing: *The Summer of Aviya*
Wooden Gun
Because of that War

Listening: *Od nitra’eh; Rinah* (*Gadalnu Yachad*, vol. 2: Salon music)

7. **Tel Aviv vs Jerusalem and the loss of innocence**

Reading:

Primary sources

Goldberg *Tel-Aviv 1935*, in Carmi 553-4
Greenberg [poem] *On a Night of Rain in Jerusalem* in Carmi 530-1
Amihai *On the Day of Atonement* in Carmi 571
Amihai in *Poems of Jerusalem and Love Poems* 3-9
Zach *A Moment* in Carmi 576
Ravikovitch *Mechanical Doll* in Carmi 578
Shabtai *The Visit* in Abramson 213-9

Secondary sources
Zerubavel, ch.9 (147-177)
Shaked, Gershon 'Waves and currents in Hebrew fiction in the past 40 years', Modern Hebrew Literature 1, 1988, 4-12.
Bermant, 148-164
Ofrat, Gideon 'Tel-Aviv and Jerusalem art', Ariel 50, 1979, 45-62.

Viewing: Late Summer Blues
Listening: Al chof achziv; sippurey pugi; hachayal sheli hazar Gadalu Yahad v. 3-4: Army troupes and the beginning of Israeli pop and rock.
Naomi Shemer: Yerushalayim shel Zahav (song on Shemer, CD 1)

8. Facing the Other: Jew and Arab, Ashkenazi and Sephardi

Reading:

Primary sources
Tammuz The Swimming Contest in Abramson, 127-138
Oz, Where the Jackals Howl in Oz Where the Jackals Howl and Other Stories
Amihai On the Day of Atonement in Carmi 571
Liebrecht, Room on the Roof in Diamant 231-258
Shamir Doctor Schmidt in Abramson, 147-159
Kishon, Unfair to Goliath, 43-52

Secondary sources
Hever, Hannan "Yitzhak Shami: Ethnicity as an Unresolved Conflict" Shofar, 24(2), 2006, 124-139

Viewing: Sallah Shabati
Hamsin (1983)
Nadia (1987)

9. Sephardi tradition retrieved/transformed

Reading:

Primary sources
Yehoshua, A.B. Mr.Mani [novel]
Secondary sources
Krausz, Ernest, 'Edah and 'ethnic group' in Israel', *Journal of Jewish Sociology* 28, pp. 5-18, 1986
Bentolila, Yaakov, 'Bilingualism in a Moroccan settlement in the South of Israel', *Israel Social Science Research* 9(1,2), 1994, 89-108.


10. The Israeli woman

Reading:

Primary sources
Rachel. Meeting, hardly meeting; *My dead; To my country* [on-line poetry]
Wallach, Yona. Hebrew; Jonathan; When you come… [on-line poetry]
Ravikovitch, Dahlia. A dress of fire; In the year to come… [on-line poetry]
Kahana-Carmon, Amalia. N’ima Sassoon writes poems. In Diament, 48-70
Ravikovitch, Dahlia. *A slight delay*. In Diament, 151-159.
Hendel, Yehudit. *Apples in honey*. In Diament, 263-274.
Zelda, Light a candle; Cast me not away; [online]
Castel-Bloom, *High Tide* in Abramson 331-5

Secondary sources
Fuchs, Esther. 'Images of love and war in contemporary Israeli fiction: Toward a feminist re-vision,' *Modern Judaism*, 6(2), 1986, 189-196.

Listening: Naomi Shemer: *Shir nolad; Bedamayich chayi* (songs on Shemer CD 3)

Viewing: My Michael
Siege
Broken Wings
11. Haredi, Hiloni, Dati-Leumi, Postzionist: War within and without

Reading:

Primary sources
Sobol, Soul of a Jew. [drama]
Liebrecht, Savyon. Apples from the desert. In Diamant, 71-80
Keret, Etgar. The story about a bus driver who wanted to be God; Missing Kissinger. In Keret 2001.
Koren Together with Them in Abramson 336-340
Mishol, Agi. A little prayer for Sunday: Woman martyr [on-line poetry]
Someck, Roni. Arabic work [on-line poetry]

Secondary sources
Gertz, Nurith. ch.7
Friedman, Menakhem. 'Haredim confront the Modern City', in Medding, 74-96
Shaked, Gershon 'Hebrew prose in the 1990s: Darkness under the sun', Modern Hebrew Literature 11, 1993, 4-8
Mintz, The Boom in Contemporary Israeli Fiction. Introduction (17-34)
Avisar, Ilan. 'Israeli cinema and the ending of Zionist ideology’, in Lazin & Mahler, 153-168.
Glinert, Lewis. ‘And in his death they were divided’, Midstream, Jan 1998
Halkin, Talya. “Satire or entertainment?” Jerusalem Post, Dec. 9, 2004

Listening: Naomi Shemer: Sfirat melay (song on Shemer CD 2)
Shalom Haver (CD)
Yosef Karduner: Shir laMaalot, (song on CD Road Marks)
Avraham Ben David: Mashiach Mashiach
Dag Nachash: Shirat ha-Stiker

Viewing: Cup Final
As if Nothing Happened
Evacuation Order
Yalla Ya Nasrallah. www.youtube.com/watch?v=8ePm1aRAHFk