The Reel Israel: Studying Israel through Film

The study of Israel through film opens new horizons for the discussion of Israeli nationality, society, ethnicity, religion, culture and politics. Films from different periods, both feature films and documentaries, are fascinating historical-cultural documents for the study of their context of production, changing historical circumstances, and the inscription of history upon collective memory. When studied in a wider cultural context, the evolution of Israeli culture, the ideological struggles over national identity, and the tapestry of the Israeli scene can be envisaged in all of its richness.

However, for students in American academe, who often lack the solid foundation of historical facts and their contexts, our recommendation is to focus on documentary films, which can provide an authentic and intriguing spectacle of Israeli society, history, politics, and culture. Such documentary films, just like any other mediated media representations of social and political realities, should not be taken as non-biased, “objective” accounts of the “real” social and historical reality. Yet, they do provide the images, narratives, discourses and debates as recorded on film by Israelis in Israel, screened mostly on Israeli television, and viewed by Israelis as vehicles for self negotiation and reflection. In that sense, such documentary films provide an authentic account of Israeli realities, and in turn, may be considered as vital perspectives that enrich the discussion of Israel.

We have chosen several topics, themes and issues, which we conceive as basic and fundamental in a curriculum of Israel Studies. Under each topic we suggest several films, which provide multiple perspectives, test cases or variations on the theme. Such films offer an excellent starting point for a discussion, and ideally should be complemented with more facts and sources, preferably researched by the students themselves, as films do not present the whole picture. The films lay bare the contradictions, debates, problems, and complexities of Israeli society, politics and culture. They extend an open invitation for a discussion of these very complexities, therein lies their importance as multifaceted resources for educating about Israel.

We urge our colleagues to use this proposed repertory in a mix and match mode, as well as, to propose additions of both items and categories.

As for the use of feature films for the teaching of Israel: as a guiding principle, we believe that the teaching of cinema, communication arts, television and other media requires adequate academic expertise of these respective fields. Feature films are highly stylized and manipulative cultural artifacts, which can be dangerously taken at face value as dependable historical and factual documents. We therefore propose to use them
in teaching about Israel with this problematic in mind, and as a rule, accompanied with appropriate references to their scholarly reading as social or historical texts. We propose a limited list of feature films, which relate to Israeli history in a retrospective mode. The list specifies the decade and context depicted.

We find that the use of films as suggested here can offer a unique and fascinating venue for a discussion of the short yet eventful Israeli history. We hope that discussions evolving from the viewing of these films will motivate the pursuit of factual and unbiased study of Israeli history and its place in the Middle East, on the one hand, and greater, non-stereotypical awareness of the complexities of Israeli society, politics and culture on the other.
Topics in Israel Studies: Suggested Films for Course Use

Israel: A Visual History

Good Morning Israel (Amir Har-Gil, 2005)
http://www.dragomanfilms.com/GMI_ISRAEL60.html

Snapshots (Dov Gil-Har and Uri Rozen, 2008)
http://www.israelifilms.co.il/40420/Snapshots

Eye Witness (Micha Shagrir, 2008)
http://www.ruthfilms.com/catalogsearch/result/?q=60+years+eye+witness&x=0&y=0

Etz O Palestine (Nathan Axelrod, Yoel Zilberg, Uri Zohar, 1962)
http://www.israelifilms.co.il/40420/Etz-O-Palestine

The Israeli Kleidoscope: Young Israelis reflect on Israeli Identity

Unsettled (Adam Hootnick, 2007)
http://www.dragomanfilms.com/unsettled.html

On The Front Line (Hanoch Zeevi, 2002)
http://www.ruthfilms.com/films/docs/israeli-mosaic/on-the-frontline.html

The Name My Mother Gave Me (Eli Tal-El, 2008)
http://www.ruthfilms.com/films/docs/israeli-mosaic/the-name-my-mother-gave-me.html

Channels of Rage (Anat Halachmi, 2003)
http://www.ruthfilms.com/catalogsearch/result/?q=Channels+of+Rage

Out for Love, Be Back Shortly (Dan Kazir, 1997)

Company Jasmin (Yael Katzir, 2003)

Israel Society: Ethnicities, Multiculturalism, Immigration

Jewish Secularism, Religious Judaism, and the Spectrum in Between

On The Front Line (Hanoch Zeevi, 2002)
http://www.ruthfilms.com/films/docs/israeli-mosaic/on-the-frontline.html

“Did Herzl Really Sat That?” *Transparent Kippa* (Ido Bahat, 2006)
http://www.ruthfilms.com/films/clusters/did-herzl-really-say-that/transparent-kippa.html

*Say Amen* (David Deri, 2005)
http://www.ruthfilms.com/catalogsearch/result/?q=say+amen

*Righteous Rabbis Tombs* (Prosper Malka, 2005)
http://www.israelifilms.co.il/40420/Righteous-Rabbis-Tombs

*Jerusalem Right - Tel Aviv Left* (Alon Sharvit, 2006)
http://www.israelifilms.co.il/40420/Jerusalem-Right---Tel-Aviv-Left

**Immigration**

*The Name My Mother Gave Me* (Eli Tal-El, 2008)
http://www.ruthfilms.com/films/docs/israeli-mosaic/the-name-my-mother-gave-me.html

*The Pioneers* (Sigalit Banai, 2008)
http://www.israelifilms.co.il/40420/The%2DPioneers%2D1

“Did Herzl Really Sat That?” *Israel our home?* (Ido Bahat, 2006)
http://www.ruthfilms.com/films/clusters/did-herzl-really-say-that/israel-our-home.html

*Stalin’s Forgotten Zion* (Rob Hof, 2004)

**Ethnicities and Minorities**

*The Golden Cage* (Chana Calderon, 2005)
http://www.ruthfilms.com/the-golden-cage.html

*Fog* (Rafik Halabi, 2008)
http://www.ruthfilms.com/catalogsearch/result/?q=fog&x=21&y=9

*Lady Kul El Arab* (Ibtisam Mara'an, 2008)
“Did Herzl Really Sat That?” *Oh, My Homeland!* (Ido Bahat, 2006)
http://www.ruthfilms.com/films/clusters/did-herzl-really-say-that/o-my-homeland.html

*Good Morning Israel* (Amir Har-Gil, 2005)
http://www.dragomanfilms.com/GMI_ISRAEL60.html

*The Film Class* (Uri Rosenwaks, 2006)
http://www.ruthfilms.com/catalogsearch/result/?q=the+film+class&x=0&y=0

*Black over White*/ Idan Reichel project (Tomer Heyman, 2008)
http://www.ruthfilms.com/black-over-white.html

*The Ashkenazim* (Dani Dotan and Dalia Mevorach, 2005)

*Have You Heard About The Panthers?* (Nissim Mossek, 2002)
http://www.israelifilms.co.il/40420/Have_You_Heard_About_the_Panthers

*Yes, Miss Comander* (Dan Setton and Itzik Lerner, 2009)
http://www.israelifilms.co.il/40420/Yes%2D%2DMiss%2DCommander%2D

*Georgia My Love* (Noga Gamlieli, 2007)
http://www.israelifilms.co.il/40420/Georgia-My-Love

*Pickles* (Dalit Kimor, 2005)
http://www.israelifilms.co.il/40420/Pickles

*Desert Brides* (Ada Ushpiz, 2008)

*My Fantasia* (Duki Dror, 2001)

*The Wandering Samaritan* (Ohad Ufaz, 2005)

**History and the Conflict**

*Blood and Tears* (Isidor Rosmarin, 2007)
http://www.amazon.com/Blood-Tears-Arab-Israeli-Isidore-
Voice of Jerusalem (Ofer Naim, 2009)
http://www.israelifilms.co.il/40420/Voice%2Dof%2DJerusalem

Jerusalem Day (Jonathan Aroch, 2007)
http://www.israelifilms.co.il/40420/Jerusalem-Day

They Were all We Had (Jonathan Paz, 1988)
http://www.israelifilms.co.il/40420/They--Were--all--We--Had

Shalom, Jordan (Dov Gil-Har, 2005)
http://www.israelifilms.co.il/40420/Shalom_Jordan

Follow Me: The Story of the Six Day War (Yigael Ephrati, 1968)
http://www.ergomedia.com/IS50_5.HTM

Six Days in June (2008)

The Yom Kippur War (Leo Filer, 1975)
http://www.jewishvideo.com

The Conflict as an Intercultural encounter

Channels of Rage (Anat Halachmi, 2003)
http://www.ruthfilms.com/catalogsearch/result/?q=Channels+of+Rage

Oriental (Avi Nesher, 2004)
nesheril@netvision.net.il

First Lesson in Peace (Yoram Honig, 2006)
http://www.ruthfilms.com/catalogsearch/result/?q=first+lesson+in+peace&x=0&y=0

Knowledge is the Beginning (Paul Smaczny, 2006)
http://www.israelifilms.co.il/40420/Knowledge_is_the_Beginning

Bridge Over the Wadi (Barak and Tomer Haiman, 2006)

Men on the Edge (Macabit Abrahmson, Avner Faingulernt, 2005)
**Biographies and Israeli History**

*Ben Gurion - An Appointment with Destiny* (Melville Mark)  

*Slaves of the Sword: Rabin, Dayan, Sharon* (Paul Jenkins, 2004)  

*Sharon* (Dror Moreh, 2007)  
[http://www.israelifilms.co.il/40420/Sharon](http://www.israelifilms.co.il/40420/Sharon)

*Yitzhak Rabin - A Biography* (Ben Shani, 2004)  
[http://www.israelifilms.co.il/40420/Yitzhak_Rabin_-_A_Biography](http://www.israelifilms.co.il/40420/Yitzhak_Rabin_-_A_Biography)

*Begin: From Brisek to Jerusalem* (hanan Azran, 2009)  

*Citizen Aloni* (Anat Saragusti, 2008)  

**Israel: A cultural Geography**

*Jerusalem*

“And Herzl Really Sat That?” *And If I Forget Thee...* (Ido Bahat, 2006)  

*Voice of Jerusalem* (Ofer Naim, 2009)  
[http://www.israelifilms.co.il/40420/Voice%2Dof%2DJerusalem](http://www.israelifilms.co.il/40420/Voice%2Dof%2DJerusalem)

*Jerusalem Day* (Jonathan Aroch, 2007)  
[http://www.israelifilms.co.il/40420/Jerusalem-Day](http://www.israelifilms.co.il/40420/Jerusalem-Day)

*Jerusalem Right - Tel Aviv Left* (Alon Sharvit, 2006)  
[http://www.israelifilms.co.il/40420/Jerusalem-Right---Tel-Aviv-Left](http://www.israelifilms.co.il/40420/Jerusalem-Right---Tel-Aviv-Left)

*On the Front Line* (Hanoch Zeevi, 2001)  
[http://www.ruthfilms.com/catalogsearch/result/?q=on+the+front+line&x=0&y=0](http://www.ruthfilms.com/catalogsearch/result/?q=on+the+front+line&x=0&y=0)
**Tel Aviv**

*Etz O Palestine* (Nathan Axelrod, Yoel Zilberg, Uri Zohar, 1962)
http://www.israelifilms.co.il/40420/Etz-O-Palestine

*Tel Aviv Jaffa* parts I & II (Anat Zeltzer and Modi Baron, 2009)
http://www.israelifilms.co.il/40420/Tel%2DAviv%2D%2D%2DJaffa

*Out for Love, Be Back Shortly* (Dan Kazir, 1997)

*Another Land* (Amit Goren, 1998)

*Dear Edmond* (Amit Goren, 2006)

**The Kibbutz: Idea, History, Culture**

*Children of the Sun* (Ran Tal and Ron Goldman, 2007)

*The Volunteers* (Molly Landseman, 2009)
http://www.ruthfilms.com/films/docs/israeli-mosaic/the-volunteers.html

“Did Hertzl Really Say That?” *The World of Yesterday* (Ido Bahat, 2007)

*Degania* (Itzhak Rubin, 2008)
http://www.israelifilms.co.il/40420/Degania

*Eight Twenty Eight* (Lavi Ben Gal, 2007)

**The Disengagement from Gaza**

*10 Days in Gaza* (Dov Gil-Har, 2005)
http://www.israelifilms.co.il/40420/10_Days_in_Gaza

*Storm of Emotion* (Yael Klopmann, 2006)
http://www.ruthfilms.com/catalogsearch/result/?q=storm+of+emotion&x=0&y=0

*And Behold, There Came a Great Wind* (Ziv Alexandrony, 2006)
**Israeli Culture: Origins, Resources and Traits**

*Go in Peace Rain* (Reuven Hecker, 2007)

*Ladino - 500 years Young* (Rina Papish, 2005)
[http://www.israelifilms.co.il/40420/Ladino_-_500_Years_Young](http://www.israelifilms.co.il/40420/Ladino_-_500_Years_Young)

*The Ashkenazim* (Dani Dotan and Dalia Mevorach, 2005)

*Sefarad - Ways and Life* (Documentary Series, Jack Matitiahu, 2008)

*It’s About Time* (Ayelet Menahemi, Eilona Ariel, 2001)

**Negotiations of Israeli History and the Holocaust**

*Displaced: The Bad Boys of Exodos* (Yael Kipper Zaretzky, 2008)

*Le Grand Akshan* (Ron Goldmann, 2003)
[http://www.ruthfilms.com/catalogsearch/result/?q=le+grand+akshan&x=22&y=5](http://www.ruthfilms.com/catalogsearch/result/?q=le+grand+akshan&x=22&y=5)

*Watermarks* (Yaron Zilberman, 2004)

*Code name: Bayonet* (Ron Maiberg, 2006)

*Ponar* (Racheli Schwatz, 2002)
[http://www.israelifilms.co.il/40420/Ponar](http://www.israelifilms.co.il/40420/Ponar)

*Daddy come to the Fair* (Nitza Gonen, 1996)
[http://www.israelifilms.co.il/40420/Daddy-Come-to-the-Fair](http://www.israelifilms.co.il/40420/Daddy-Come-to-the-Fair)

*Out of the Forest* (Limor Pinchasov and Yaron Kafteri, 2004)
[http://www.israelifilms.co.il/40420/Out_Of_The_Forest](http://www.israelifilms.co.il/40420/Out_Of_The_Forest)
The Children of Teheran (Yehuda Kaveh, David Tour, Dalia Guttman, 2007)
http://www.israelifilms.co.il/40420/The_Children_of_Teheran_

The Bunker (Nitza Gonen, 2002)
http://www.israelifilms.co.il/40420/The-Bunker

**Israelis and Terrorism**

Open Eye - Open I (Ohad Ufaz and Shirley Barenholz, 2007)

Number 17 (David Ofek, 2003)
http://www.edenproductions.co.il/detailProduction.asp?pID=18&fromPage=productio ns

ZAKA (Noam Shalev, 2004)
http://www.israelifilms.co.il/40420/ZAKA_Living_With_Death

Jenin Diary (Gil Mezuman, 2002)
http://www.israelifilms.co.il/40

Out for Love, Be Back Shortly (Dan Kazir, 1997)

Another Land (Amit Goren, 1998)

Code name: Bayonet (Ron Maiberg, 2006)
http://www.dragomanfilms.com/cnb.html

To Die in Jerusalem (Hilla Medalia, 2007)
http://www.dragomanfilms.com/tdij.html

Dubak - A Palestinian Jew (Ella Alterman, 2008)

Footsteps in the Sand (Revital Shtern, 2006)
Feature films contextualized in Israeli history

Pioneers

They Were Ten (Baruch Dinar, 1960)

Unsettled Land (Uri Barbash, 1987)

1940s:

Crossfire (Gideon Ganani, 1988)

Exodus (Otto Preminger, 1960)

Hill 24 Doesn’t answer (Thorold Dickinson, 1954)

The House on Sheloush Street (Moshe Mizrahi, 1973)

Rage and Glory (Avi Nesher, 1985)

1950s:

Noa at Seventeen (Yitzhak Yeshurun, 1980)

The Summer of Aviya (Eli Cohen, 1988)

The Woden Gun (Ilan Moshenzon, 1979)

1960s:

Every Bastard is a King (Uri Zohar, 1968)

Late Summer Blues (Renen Schorr, 1987)

Over the Ocean (Yaacov Goldwasser, 1991)

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

1970s:

Matching Sights (Eyal Halfon, 2003)

Operation Thunderbolt (Menachem Golan, 1977)
Three Mothers (Dina Tzvi-Riklis, 2004)

1980s:
Campfire (Joseph Cedar, 2003)
Cup Final (Eran Riklis, 1999)

1990s:
Yana’s Friends (Arik Kaplun, 1998),
Siren’s Song (Eitan Fox, 1994)

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