Zerubavel, Israeli Society Though Film

Whereas early Israeli films focused on the nation-building effort, Israeli cinema has become increasingly diverse, critical, and multicultural in its orientation. Given this dramatic development, films provide a fascinating window to explore some key developments in Israeli life while exploring the development of Israeli cinema and the significance of film as a distinct art form.

The films and the readings introduce questions that are a key to understanding major social, political, and cultural issues which the course explores: How did a society of immigrant Jews from numerous countries evolve into an “Israeli” society before the foundations of the state in 1948? What was the experience of growing up in Israel of the 1950s? What was the impact of the Holocaust on the young Israeli society and how has it changed overtime? What was the unique communal life and children-rearing method of the kibbutz and how has the kibbutz been transformed in recent decades? What is the impact of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on Israeli life and on Jewish-Arab relations within and outside of Israel? How is the diversity of Jewish religious life depicted in film? How are Israeli gender and queer identities constructed and portrayed in various settings?

Students will view films and write responses to them and prepare the readings assignments as part of their own going work in advance of each class. We will view additional films in class and explore through the films, the readings and class discussions the answers to these questions. Through the weekly responses, class discussions and essay-based exams, students will learn to approach the films critically and to improve their writing as well as expand their knowledge of both the study of film and of Israeli society.

Learning Goals

- Provide necessary tools to critically view films
- Contextualize films in the broader framework of Israeli history
- Improve analytical thinking through writing brief film reviews and class discussions
- Learn to develop a writing project in timely fashion
- Produce a well-written paper based on analysis of films and readings

Class requirements

- Attendance
  Attendance in class is required and class participation is a vital part of the course. More than one unexcused absence will lower the students’ grades. More than two absences will not be accepted. If students miss a class, it is their responsibility to get notes from a classmate. Students should therefore make sure to exchange email contact information with others at the start of the semester for this purpose.
• **Film viewing and weekly responses**
Students will view films at the Media Center located at the Mabel Smith Douglas Library (for further info see [http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/rul/libs/media/media_center.shtml](http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/rul/libs/media/media_center.shtml)) and write a brief, one-page response to the film that address key points that the film addresses and an independent, personal assessment of its strengths and weaknesses. The responses must be submitted in the students’ drop box at the sakai website in advance of the class and **no later than 8:00pm on the day prior to the class meeting.** Students are therefore encouraged to schedule the viewing and submit the response a few days in advance to avoid last-minute and technical problems. Responses will not be counted toward the grade if submitted later.

• **Readings and class participation**
All readings for the class will be available on the sakai website. Preparing the reading assignments along with viewing the films **prior** to the class for which they are assigned is necessary for one’s participation in class discussion, and is an important part of this course.

• **Mid-term and Final Exams**
In addition to the one-page weekly responses, students will have a mid-term exam and a final exam which will consist of essay writing that will draw on the films, the assigned readings, and class discussions. The exams will be evaluated on the basis of students’ demonstration of their familiarity with the texts and the issues covered throughout the course and their ability to integrate them in an independent and thoughtful way and in a clear and concise manner.

**Grading**

- Attendance – 10%
- Viewing films and submitting weekly one-page responses –25%
- Reading assignments and class participation – 20%
- Midterm exam – 20%
- Final exam – 25%

**Academic Integrity**

Students are required to follow current Academic Integrity Policy as indicated in the website: [http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/integrity.shtml](http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/integrity.shtml). **Violations include cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, denying others access to information or material, and facilitating violations of academic integrity.** For further information on how to avoid plagiarism in your work, see [http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/rul/lib_instruct/instruct_document.shtml](http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/rul/lib_instruct/instruct_document.shtml) and take a 20 min. interactive-tutorial on Plagiarism and Academic Integrity at [http://sccweb.scc-net.rutgers.edu/douglass/sal/plagiarism/Intro.html](http://sccweb.scc-net.rutgers.edu/douglass/sal/plagiarism/Intro.html)
**Israeli Society Through Film**

**Weekly Course Schedule**

**Week 1 -- Introduction**

Review of course goals, themes, and assignments
Overview of Israeli history and discussion of the history of Israeli film

*Film: He Walked Through the Fields* (Milo, 1968)

**Week 2 -- Childhood in the Shadow of War: The Holocaust and 1948**

*Films*  
*Aviya’s Summr* (Eli Cohen, 1988) – view prior to class and write a film response  
*The Wooden Gun* (Moshezon, 1979) – in class


**Week 3 – Immigrants: Life on the Margins of Society**

*Film: Sallah* (Efraim Kishon, 1964) - view prior to class and write a film response


*Recommended Reading*

**Week 4 -- Recent Immigrants within a Multicultural Environment**

*Films*  
*Love and Dance* (Eitan Anner, 2006) -- view prior to class and write a film response  
*Turn Left at the End of the World* (Avi Nesher, 2004) – in class


Recommended Reading

Week 5 -- Crossing Boundaries: Jews and Arabs

Films  The Band’s Visit (Eran Korilin, 2008) -- view prior to class and write a film response
Trumpet in the Wadi (Lina Chaplin, Slava Chaplin, 2002) – in class


Week 6 -- Women on the Periphery

Films  Siege (Gilberto Toffano, 1969) – view prior to class and write a film response
Broken Wings (Nir Bergman, 2002) – in class


Recommended Reading

Week 7 -- Youth Protest and Politics

Films  Late Summer Blues (Renen Schorr, 1987) -- view prior to class and write a film review
Time of Favor (Joseph Cedar, 2000) – in class


  * Midterm essay topic given in class

Week 8 -- The Kibbutz: Old Visions, New realities

• Midterm exam is due; no viewing assignment for this week

Films  Children of the Sun; documentary (Ran Tal, 2007) Segments in class
Galilee Eskimos (Jonathan Paz, 2007) – Segments in class

**Recommended Readings**


**Week 9 -- Israelis, Germans, and Postmemory of the Holocaust**

**Films**

- *Metallic Blues* (Dan Verete, 2004) – view prior to class and write a film response
- *Walk on Water* (Eytan Fox, 2004) – in class


**Weeks 10 & 11 -- War Memories**

**Films**

- *Beaufort* (Joseph Cedar, 2007) – view film prior to class and write a film response
- *Waltz with Bashir* (Avi Folman, 2008) – in class


**Recommended Readings**


**Week 12 -- Orthodox and Ultra Orthodox Israelis**

**Films**

- *My Father, My Lord* (David Volach, 2007) – view prior to class and write a film response
- *Srugim,* television series (Hava Divon and Eliezer Shapiro, 2008-10) – in class


**Recommended Reading**

**Week 13 -- Queer Identities**

**Film**  
*The Bubble* ((Eytan Fox, 2006) – view prior to class and write a film response

*Yossi and Jagger* (Eytan Fox, 2002) --


**Recommended Reading**

**Week 14 – Wrap Up**

*Review of major themes and issues.*

*Final Exam essay questions given in class*

Final Exam due a week after class ends