

## ISRAELI LITERATURE AND CULTURE (JSP/REL/LIT/MES 335)

Spring 2017 Tuesday/Thursday 3:30-5:05

DR ERELLA BROWN SOFER

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### Course description and goals

The course discusses major internal and external conflicts that are still shaping the life of Israeli people. We trace current issues to their historical, religious, economical, and social roots which lead to the creation of the modern Jewish State. The ideological, cultural, and political aspects of Israel's existence are discussed through their representations in literature, theater, and film. While learning about Israeli Culture and Society, students should develop skills such as close reading, critical thinking, scholarly writing, and public speaking.

### Required Texts

1. *Israel: A Traveler's Literary Companion*, ed. Michael Gluzman and Naomi Seidman (San Francisco: Whereabouts Press, 1996).
2. Selection of articles, stories, and poems, available on Blackboard
3. David Ohana and Robert S. Wistrich, *The Shaping of Israeli Identity: Myth, Memory, and Trauma* (London, 2006).

### Movies

1. *He Walked in the Fields*
2. *Time of Favor*
3. *Kadosh* or *Gett*
4. *Ajami* or *Borrowed Identity*
5. *Schur* or *Salach Shabti*
6. *Yaldei HaShemesh* (Sunshine Children) or Ilana Dayan's Television program "*Kibbutz Sof*" (Kibbutz End).

### Recommended Books and Media at Bird Library

- 1, Yizthak Laor, *The Myths of Liberal Zionism* (New York: Verso, 2009)
2. David Grossman, *The Yellow Wind*, (New York, 2002)

3. Yael Feldman, *Glory and Agony: Isaac's Sacrifice and National Narrative* (Stanford University Press 2010).

4. Ruth Kartun-Blum, *Profane Scriptures* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1999).

5. Yael Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots: Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition*

## Schedule

### Part I: Myth, Zionism, and Historical Memory in Modern Israel

Tuesday, January 17 **Introduction: Zionism and the modern revival of Biblical Myths.**

Thursday, January 19 The Binding of Isaac: Mythical perspectives on the Evolution of Zionist Ideology. Required Reading: Ruth Kartun-Blum, "Isaac Rebound: The Aqedah as a Paradigm in Modern Hebrew Poetry"; Selection of Akeda poems. (available on Blackboard, also in Ohana)

Tuesday, January 24 **The Myth of Tel Chai and Revisionist Nationalism in Israel.** Required Reading: Yael Zrubavel, "Tel Chai and the Meaning of Pioneering" (temporarily available on Blackboard, in Ohana).

Thursday, January 26 **The Myth of Masada and the Holocaust.** Required Reading: Yechiam Weitz, "Political Dimensions of Holocaust Memory in Israel" (temporarily available on Blackboard, in Ohana).

Tuesday, January 31 **Movie:** He Walked in the Fields

Thursday, February 2 (Movie continued). **Myth and Historical Memory** (continued).

Tuesday, February 7 **Myth and Historical Memory** (continued).

Thursday, February 9 **Myth and Historical Memory: Conclusions**

**First Paper Due February 9**

## Part II

### The Social Divide

#### A. Ultra-Orthodox or Religion and State in Jerusalem

Tuesday, February 14 **Reading Amos Oz, "Thank God for His Daily Blessing" (in A Traveler's).**

Thursday, February 16 Reading: Oz continued, Yosel Birstein, "In the Neighborhood where Biblical Prophets..." (in A Traveler's). **Movie:** *Kadosh*

Tuesday February 21 Readings: discussion (continued), *Kadosh* (continued).

#### B. Borders: Land and The Arab Israeli Conflict After 1967

Thursday February 23 Reading: David Grossman, "The Other Barta'a" and Edgar Kerett, "Cocked and Locked" (in Travel's).

Tuesday February 28 Reading: Grossman, "The essence of Being a Sabra" (available on Blackboard)  
**Movie**: *Time of Favor*.

Thursday, March 2 *Time of Favor* Continues. *Reading*: discussion continued

Tuesday, March 7 Eric Cohen, "Israel as a Post-Zionist Society" (in Ohana)

Thursday, March 9 Borders Conclusions

**Second paper due March 9.**

**SPRING BREAK March 12<sup>th</sup>**

## **Part III Additional Perspectives on Cultural Identities**

### **A. Israeli Arabs**

Tuesday, March 21 Reading: Sayed Kashua Selection from his columns in Ha'aretz.

Thursday, March 23 *Movie*: *Ajami* . Reading: d Kashua'a columns and selected prose.

Tuesday, March 28 *Ajami* (Continued) , *Reading*: d Kashua'a columns and selected prose (cOntinued).

Thursday, March 30 Conclusions

### **B. Shoah: The Second Generation**

Tuesday, April 4 **Shoah**: reading: Yitzhak Laor, "Rhachely's Father was an Actor" (in Traveler's)

Thursday, April 6 reading: Savyon Liebrecht (story's title to be announced. Available on Blackboard)

Tuesday, April 11 Conclusions

### **C. Sephardim and Ashkenazim**

Thursday, April 13 reading: Yoram Bilu and Eyal Ben Ari, "Modernity and Charisma in Contemporary Israel: The Case of Baba Sali and Baba Baruch" (In Ohana)

**Movie** : *Schur* and Reading continued

Tuesday, April 18 *Schur* and Reading continued.

**Tuesday, April 20 Third Paper Due**

Thursday, April 25 **Identity Politics in Israel** Conclusions

Tuesday, April 27 Identity Politics in Israel Conclusions

## **Tuesday May 2 Last day of Classes: Review for Final Exam**

**Papers** should be 5-page (double-spaced) close analyses, focusing on Rhetorical aspects such as narrative perspectives of a given social segment, or figurative language. And other persuasive devices used in writing and media in order to win the audience support. Each paper will be revised on the basis of comments from the instructor. The revision is in most cases due one week after the marked paper has been returned to the student. Be sure to reread the comments on your previous paper before you write the next one.

**Requirements and Grading:** Three 3-5 pages papers with revisions (45% of grade); careful preparation of readings, regular attendance, and class participation (20% of grade); quizzes and final examination (35% of grade).

**Quizzes:** To ensure diligent preparation of the reading assignments by all students, there will be random quizzes. Come to class even if you haven't read the assignment as carefully as you would like, because an absence counts as an even lower than the grade for turning in a blank sheet of paper with your name on it.

**Final Examination:** The final includes five sections that include 1) the geography of the Middle East, Europe, and Israel; 2) the definitions of terms covered in class; 3) major historical and cultural figure, and other social aspects read in the material of this course; 4) identification and interpretations of passages from the stories, poems, articles, and films; and 5) one short analytical essay.

**Extra Credit:** There will be several opportunities for you to earn extra credit: (1) By undertaking difficult reading assignments; (2) By attending relevant public lectures (info. will be given in class). After you go to an event of this kind, submit a one-paragraph synopsis to receive credit.

**Plagiarism:** Always acknowledge your sources, because plagiarism is a serious offense. Don't even think of taking anything off the web without using **quotation marks**. It's unethical, as easy for professors to catch as it is for students to steal, and the consequence is a failing grade.

**Attendance:** Your final grade will be adversely affected if you miss more than two classes. Save these permissible absences for when you really need them.

General:

- Students are expected to meet with the instructor regularly.
- If you are a student with documented disability on record at SU and wish to have special accommodation made for you, please see the instructor immediately.
- Students are recommended to participate in extracurricular events, suggested by the instructor, such as lectures and Israeli movies.
- Policies to be included on syllabi:
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  - 1. Academic Integrity Statement

- The Syracuse University Academic Integrity Policy holds students accountable for the integrity of the work they submit. Students should be familiar with the Policy and know that it is their responsibility to learn about instructor and general academic expectations with regard to proper citation of sources in written work. The policy also governs the integrity of work submitted in exams and assignments as well as the veracity of signatures on attendance sheets and other verifications of participation in class activities. Serious sanctions can result from academic dishonesty of any sort. For more information and the complete policy, see <http://academicintegrity.syr.edu>

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- 2. Statement Regarding Disability-Related Accommodations

Students who are in need of disability-related academic accommodations must register with the Office of Disability Services (ODS), 304 University Avenue, Room 309, 315-443-4498. Students with authorized disability-related accommodations should provide a current Accommodation Authorization Letter from ODS to the instructor and review those accommodations with the instructor. Accommodations, such as exam administration, are not provided retroactively; therefore, planning for accommodations as early as possible is necessary. For further information, see the ODS website, Office of Disability Services <<http://disabilityservices.syr.edu>>

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- 3. Statement Regarding Religious Holidays and Observances

SU's religious observances policy, found at [http://supolicies.syr.edu/emp\\_ben/religious\\_observance.htm](http://supolicies.syr.edu/emp_ben/religious_observance.htm) <[http://supolicies.syr.edu/emp\\_ben/religious\\_observance.htm](http://supolicies.syr.edu/emp_ben/religious_observance.htm)> , recognizes the diversity of faiths represented among the campus community and protects the rights of students, faculty, and staff to observe religious holy days according to their tradition. Under the policy, students are provided an opportunity to make up any examination, study, or work requirements that may be missed due to a religious observance provided they notify their instructors before the end of the second week of classes. For fall and spring semesters, an online notification process is available through MySlice/Student Services/Enrollment/My Religious Observances from the first day of class until the end of the second week of class.

Office Hours: HBC Room 301A

Wednesday 10:11:30

and by appointment

