

Israeli Cinema: Nation, Gender, and Ethnicity

Spring 2012

ASIA 235

Yaron Shemer

Time: Tuesday 3:30-4:45; Screening 5-7
Thursday 3:30-4:45
Place: Hanes art Center #0215
Office: New West 109
Phone: 962-5428
Office hours: T/Th 2-3pm
E-mail: yshemer@email.unc.edu

Course description:

This course is designed for students of Middle Eastern Studies, Jewish and Hebrew Studies, Communications, Women's Studies, Global Cinema, and for all students interested in learning about Israeli culture and society as expressed in cinema. Class topics include the Arab-Israeli conflict in cinema, Women and sexuality in national and public discourses and Ethnic strifes past and present.

The official Zionist discourse of the past often foresaw the creation of an egalitarian immigrant society whose subjects' exilic ethnicities and identities will give way to the Israeli melting pot collective. **Israeli Cinema: Nation, Gender, and Ethnicity** will initially examine the filmic construction of Israeli national identity and how the films' address of gender and ethnicity was subtended by the hegemonic Zionist-national ethos. Yet, with the recent emergence of identity politics, a phenomenon marked by the determination of various groups to vie for the power to represent and be present in the cultural and political public arena and to promote primarily their own causes, contemporary Israeli cinema has challenged those hitherto prevalent ideological creeds. The class will explore the modes of expression by which contemporary Israeli films often depict a multifaceted and conflicted nascent society where "Israeliness" and national identity become ever more elusive.

Israeli Cinema: Nation, Gender, and Ethnicity purports 1. to enhance students' acquaintance with Israeli society and culture, i.e., to learn from the films; 2. to provide students with a better understanding of the multilayered contexts and perspectives within which we can situate national cinema; 3. to expand cultural appreciation of people and groups whose traditions and beliefs might differ from our own; 4. to enhance students' commend of film language, aesthetics, and discourse, i.e., to learn about film; 5. to appreciate the different ways not only of

making films but also of seeing them, i.e., to encourage critical viewing of films; and 6. to have students accustomed to discussing these matters in an informed and respectful manner.

Note: Students enrolling in this class are not expected to have previous knowledge of film theory and criticism. As indicated below, the first few classes and some of the readings would provide students with the rudimentary tools needed for our film analysis.

- Fourteen full-length films and several documentaries and shorts will be screened in class.
- All films have English subtitles.
- Knowledge of Hebrew or Arabic is not required.
- Several Israeli filmmakers will visit our class as guest speakers and will discuss their works (see class schedule).

Required texts:

- Miri Talmon and Yaron Peleg (eds.). *Israeli Cinema: Identities in Motion*. University of Texas Press, 2011.
- Shohat, Ella. *Israeli Cinema: East/West and the Politics of Representation*. I.B. Tauris, 2010.
- All other readings are available on-line either through the links provided in the syllabus or on the class Sakai site. You are expected to print these materials and bring them to class (or, if you carry your laptop to class, have them available there) when these readings are due.

Course requirements and grading:

Summary:

- Reactions papers (14%)
- Critical film reviews (18%)
- Midterm exam (10%)
- Term paper, including proposal/abstract (28%)
- Final exam (22%)
- Participation (8%)

- ◇ Reaction papers: (2x7%=14%) – Two reaction papers to the assigned readings. Students need to submit the reaction papers when the class assigned reading is due (see class schedule below). When the assigned reading consists of more than one article, students may choose to write about one article only or any number of them. “Optional reading” (see class schedule) may be discussed only in combination with another assigned reading.

Note: At least one reaction paper is due by the midterm exam, Thursday, March 15.

[One page for each reaction paper]

- ◇ Critical film reviews: (2x9%=18%) - You will write a critical analysis of two of the films screened in class. The analyses have to address more than simple content related

aspects. More on that at the beginning of the semester. Assignments are due the class meeting following the screening.

Note: At least one critical review is due by the midterm exam, Thursday, March 15.

[One page for each review]

- ◇ Midterm exam: (10%) Terms, concepts, and key figures (based on readings), Thursday, March 15.
- ◇ Term paper: (28%) – Choose one of the following topics:
 - "The films of a nation reflect its mentality in a more direct way than other artistic media..." (Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler*, pg. 5). Discuss the relationships between Israel's "psychological disposition" and its cinema. Consider elements that challenge Kracauer's view. Relate your discussion to at least one of the three arch themes of this class: nation, gender, and ethnicity.
 - Portray the changes in the representation of a theme, (e.g., land, war, etc.), a place (e.g., kibbutz), or a group of people (e.g., youth, minorities, etc.) over the years of Israeli cinema. Relate your discussion to at least one of the three arch themes of this class: nation, gender, and ethnicity.
- [Six pages]
Due: Thursday, April, 12.
- ◇ Final exam: (22%) – Tuesday, May 1, at 4pm.

The final exam is designed to assess your familiarity with and ability to synthesize materials covered in lectures, class discussions, and readings, and to relate these materials to the films we will have watched.
- ◇ Participation: (8%) You are expected to be an active participant in class discussions; simply attending class is insufficient for receiving the full eight participation points.

<p><u>Grading Scale:</u> A (94-100); A- (90-<94); B+ (88-<90); B (84-<88); B- (80-<84); C+ (78-<80); C (74-<78); C- (70-<74); D+ (68-<70); D (64-<68); D- (60-<64); Lower than 60=F.</p>
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Note the following procedures, policies, and guidelines:

- You are allowed one unexcused absence. Unless justified by family or medical emergencies, missing or coming late to more than one class will count against your grade—one point for each occurrence. If you miss class, even with an excused absence, you are responsible for making up the missed work and keeping up with the schedule of assignments. Missing more than five classes will result in an F grade.
- In addition to attending class and screenings, you are expected to dedicate six hours a week to class work. On average, the reading assignments are 60-70 pages a week; overall, the reading load is heavier in the first part of the semester.

- Submit a hard copy of your assignment. Assignments should be turned in promptly by due date at the beginning of class. No late submissions for the reaction papers and film reviews. For the term paper, one grade level will be subtracted for each day of late submission (e.g., from B+ to B). Assignments submitted over five days past the due date will automatically receive an F grade. Failure to submit the term paper will result in an F grade for the course.
- For the term paper, paper proposal is due Thursday, March 29. Proposal should include a title, one-paragraph description of your paper proposal where you state clearly and succinctly your thesis and list your primary and secondary sources. The proposal with my feedback is meant to help you conceptualize your topic of interest and guide you in designing and completing a solid (albeit short) academic paper. Two grade levels of the final paper's grade will be subtracted for failing to submit the proposal (e.g., from B+ to B-). [One page only.]
- All papers should use a standard Times New Roman 12-point font, double space, with 1" margins.
- Read intently. It is recommended that you annotate assigned texts. Students will be called on randomly to comment on class readings. This counts toward your participation grade.
- Take detailed class notes; they will be useful in reviewing class materials.
- Turn off your cell phone before class begins and do not use it until class is finished. Do not use your laptop during class unless it is part of an in-class activity.
- When you send an e-mail to the instructor, put "Israeli Cinema, ASIA 235" and your name in the subject line. Allow 24 hours for a reply.
- You may choose to write a more extensive term paper (10 to 12 pages) and present it in a mini-conference toward to the end of the semester to add up to five points to your final grade. You will need to notify me in writing by Thursday, March 15 if interested and indicate there what your topic is. More on that in class.
- You will receive two extra-credit points (up to a maximum of 6) for attending any of the designated evening events (mostly screenings) that I would announce in class.
- Accommodations will be made for students with verifiable disabilities. In order to take advantage of available accommodations, contact Disability Services. Students with special needs should advise the instructor at the beginning of the course. For information on UNC's Department of Disability Services see <http://disabilityservices.unc.edu/>
- Become familiar with the terms of the Honor Code set out at <http://instrument.unc.edu>.
- Familiarize yourself with the UNC Policies and Guidelines for a Cooperative Learning Environment (<http://www.unc.edu/ugradbulletin/procedures1.html>).

Israeli Cinema: Nation, Gender, and Ethnicity Class Schedule

- Tue., Jan. 10: Class introduction
Screening *Life according to Agfa* (Assi Dayan, 1992)
- Thu., Jan. 12: Ways of Seeing: Film aesthetics and criticism
Reading *Israeli Cinema* (Shohat): "Introduction," pp. 1-12.
- Tue., Jan. 17: Background: Early Zionism and cinema
Reading "The Origins of the Israeli-Palestinian Dispute." Gelvin, pp. 217-226.
 (Sakai)
 "From Jew to Hebrew." Gertz, pp. 175-199.
 [<http://www.tandfonline.com/libproxy.lib.unc.edu/doi/pdf/10.1080/13537129808719487>]
 "Filming the Homeland." Feldestein, in *Israeli Cinema* (Peleg and Talmon, eds.), pp. 3-15.
Screening *They Were Ten* (Baruch Dienar, 1960)
- Thu., Jan. 19: Pre-1948 cinema - Advocating Zionism: Socialist and orientalist discourses.
Reading *Israeli Cinema* (Shohat): "Beginnings in the Yishuv," pp. 13-51.
 Optional Reading "Helmar Lerski in Israel." Horak, in *Israeli Cinema* (Peleg and Talmon, eds.), pp. 16-29.
- Tue., Jan. 24: Post-1948: Heroic cinema
Reading "Israel, the Arab States, and the Palestinians." Gelvin, pp. 283-293.
 (Sakai)
Israeli Cinema (Shohat): "Post-1948: The Heroic Nationalist Genre," pp. 53-104.
Screening *Hill 24 Doesn't Answer* (Thorold Dickinson, 1954).
- Thu., Jan. 26: Post-1948 (cont.)
 Optional Reading "From Hill to Hill." Cohen, in *Israeli Cinema* (Peleg and Talmon, eds.), pp. 43-58.
- Tue., Jan. 31: The *Bourakas* genre: Ethnicity in the cinema of the '60s and '70s
Reading *Israeli Cinema* (Shohat): "The Representation of Sephardim/Mizrahim," pp. 105-161.
Screening *Sallah* (Ephraim Kishon, 1964)
- Thu., Feb. 2: The *Bourakas* genre (cont.)
- Tue., Feb. 7: Personal Cinema of the '60s and '70s: Early challenges to the Zionist ethos
Reading *Israeli Cinema* (Shohat): "Personal Cinema and the Politics of Allegory," pp. 163-213.
Screening *Beyond the Walls* (Uri Barabash, 1986)
- Thu., Feb. 9: The 1980s: Political Cinema and the Palestinian Wave
Reading *Israeli Cinema* (Shohat): "The Return of the Repressed," pp. 215-247.

- Tue., Feb 14: The 1980s: Political Cinema and the Palestinian Wave (cont.)
Reading "Borders in Motion." Ben-Zvi-Morad, in *Israeli Cinema* (Peleg and Talmon, eds.), pp. 276-293.
Screening *Fictitious Marriage* (Haim Bouzaglo, 1988)
- Thu., Feb 16: Contemporary Israeli cinema: From collective dreams to fragmented identities
Reading "The End of The World, The Beginning of a New World." Talmon, in *Israeli Cinema* (Peleg and Talmon, eds.), pp. 340-355.
- Tue., Feb 21: Contemporary Israeli cinema (cont.)
Reading *Israeli Cinema* (Shohat): "Postscript," pp. 249-325.
 "Negotiating Judaism in Contemporary Israeli Cinema," Chyutin, in *Israeli Cinema* (Peleg and Talmon, eds.), pp. 201-212.
 "Beaufort and My Father, My Lord." Zanger, in *Israeli Cinema* (Peleg and Talmon, eds.), pp. 225-238.
Screening *My Father, My Lord* (David Volach, 2007)
- Thu., Feb. 23: Ethnic dilemmas: Stereotyping and otherization
- Tue., Feb. 28: **Class visit by Israeli filmmaker Duki Dror**
Public Screening *Taqasim* (Duki Dror, 1999)
- Thu., March. 1: The Mizrahi ethno-class periphery
Reading "Jewish Ethnicity in Israel." Smooha, in *Jews in Israel* (Rebhun and Waxman, eds.), pp. 47-80. (Sakai)
- Spring break. No classes on March 6 and March 8
- Tue., March. 13: The Mizrahi ethno-class periphery (cont.)
Screening *Turn Left at the End of the World* (Avi Nesher, 2004)
- Thu., March 15: **Midterm exam: Terms, concepts, and key figures**
 [Due: A note of intent about extensive final paper]
- Reading** The legacy of the *Bourekas* in contemporary Israeli cinema
 "Trajectories of Mizrahi Cinema." Shemer, in *Israeli Cinema* (Peleg and Talmon, eds.), pp. 120-133.
- Tue., March. 20: **Class Visit by Israeli filmmaker and scholar Rami Kimchi**
Reading "A Turn towards Modernity." Kimchi, in *Shofar*, pp.1-24.
<http://ehis.ebscohost.com.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=d82da957-6595-420b-a06e-2c903d8fa765%40sessionmgr114&vid=2&hid=109>
Public screening *Father Language* (Rami Kimchi, 2006)
- Thu., March. 22: Intergenerational ethnic perspectives

- Tue., March 27: Recent immigrants (Russia/FSU & Ethiopia) on the Israeli screen:
Race or seniority?
Reading "Immigrant Cinema." Gershenson, in *Israeli Cinema* (Peleg and Talmon, eds.), pp. 134-148.
- Optional Reading "Disjointed Narratives." Ben Shaul, in *Israeli Cinema* (Peleg and Talmon, eds.), pp. 113-119.
- Screening** *Late Marriage* (Dover Koshashvili, 2001)
- Thu., March 29: Nation and gender: Background
Reading "Theorizing Gender and Nation." Yuval-Davis, in *Gender and Nation*, pp. 26-38. (Sakai)

Due:	Term paper abstract/outline and sources
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- Tue., April 3: The Israeli woman in Israeli Cinema - Behind the myth
Reading "Coping with the Legacy of Death: The War Widow in Israeli Films." Zerubavel, in *Israeli Cinema* (Peleg and Talmon, eds.), pp. 84-95.
"Body and Territory: Women in Israeli Cinema." Lubin, in *Israel Studies*, pp. 175-187.
http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/israel_studies/v004/4.1lubin.html
- Optional Reading "The Lady and the Death Mask." Ne'eman, in *Israeli Cinema* (Peleg and Talmon, eds.), pp. 70-83.
- Screening** *Or, my Treasure* (Keren Yedaya, 2004)
- Thu., April 5: The battle of the sexes: Masculinity and emasculation
Reading "Ecce Homo: The Transfiguration of Israeli Manhood in Israeli Films." Peleg, in *Israeli Cinema* (Peleg and Talmon, eds.), pp. 30-40.
"From Hero to Victim." Kaplan, Peleg, in *Israeli Cinema* (Peleg and Talmon, eds.), pp. 59-69.
- Tue., April 10: Nation and gender: Queer cinema
Reading "Discursive Identities in the (R)evolution of the New Israeli Queer Cinema." Padva, in *Israeli Cinema* (Peleg and Talmon, eds.), pp. 313-325.
"Homonational Desires." Yosef, in *Israeli Cinema* (Peleg and Talmon, eds.), pp. 181-198.
- Screening** *The Bubble* (Eytan Fox, 2006)
- Thu., April 12: **Class visit by Egyptian filmmaker Nadia Kamel**

Due:	Term Paper
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- Tue., April 17: The Palestinian in contemporary Israeli cinema: Victimization, victimhood, and the memory of the Holocaust
- Reading** “A Rave against the Occupation?” Naaman, in *Israeli Cinema* (Peleg and Talmon, eds.), pp. 257-275.
- “The Holocaust in Israeli Cinema as a Conflict between Survival and Morality” Avisar, in *Israeli Cinema* (Peleg and Talmon, eds.), pp. 151-167.
- Screening** *Z32* (Avi Mograbi, 2008)
- Thu., April 19: The Palestinian in contemporary Israeli cinema (cont.)
- Tue., April 24: Final discussion and course evaluations