

**Department of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures**

**General Education Curriculum (GEC)**

**Request for Course Approval: Hebrew 245, Israeli Film & Society**

**This course is intended to satisfy the GEC requirement for Category 2. Breadth: Section**

**C. Arts and Humanities (2) Visual and Performing Arts**

**Goals:**

Students evaluate significant writing and works of art. Such studies develop capacities for aesthetic and historical response and judgment; interpretation and evaluation; critical listening, reading, seeing, thinking, and writing; and experiencing the arts and reflecting on that experience.

**Expected Learning Outcomes:**

1. Students develop abilities to be informed observers of, or active participants in, the visual, spatial, performing, spoken, or literary arts.
2. Students develop an understanding of the foundations of human beliefs, the nature of reality, and the norms that guide human behavior.
3. Students examine and interpret how the human condition and human values are explored through works of art and humanistic writings.

**Visual and Performing Arts Expected Learning Outcomes:**

1. Students develop abilities to analyze, appreciate, and interpret significant works of art.
2. Students develop abilities to be informed observers or active participants in a discipline within the visual, spatial, and performing arts.

**Expected Learning Outcomes for Hebrew 245:**

Israeli film, from the heroic nationalism of the 1950s to the conflicted alienation of the present, offers a unique window on the history and society of the modern state of Israel. At the same time, the emergence of the Israeli film industry represents an important facet of modern Israeli culture.

Hebrew 245 will focus on both the aesthetic and thematic dimensions of Israeli films from 1948 to the present day, tracing the development of film production in Israel as well as the relationship between film and society. It will use a wide variety of Israeli

films as well as complementary reading assignments to introduce students to the art of filmmaking and the major issues facing Israeli society. By evaluating and interpreting films, analyzing artistic techniques, themes, and ideologies, and reflecting on the film-viewing experience, students will become critical viewers and writers. At the same time, they will gain insight into major issues in Israeli life, history and culture such as Zionism, Israeli identity, the immigrant experience, and the Arab-Israeli conflict.

This course is designed for students interested in experiencing a wide variety of perspectives on Israeli culture and society, and assumes no previous knowledge about film studies or Israel. All films will include English subtitles and assigned readings will address film analysis, Israeli cinema and related historical and social issues. For example, the first reading assignments (Week 1, Class 2) combine an accessible overview of film terms (Corrigan's "Film Terms and Topics for Film Analysis and Writing") with an introduction to Israeli film (Shohat's "Israel"). Together, they will provide students with the vocabulary to start discussing film as art and the background to begin to understand the specific circumstances of Israeli film. Subsequent weeks continue to build skills for film analysis ("The Shot: Mise-en-Scene"), focus on the Israeli film scene (Nurith Gertz, "Historical Memory: Israeli Cinema and Literature in the 1980s and 1990s,"; Daniel Bar-Tal and Yona Teichman, "Representation of Arabs in Cultural Products – Israeli Films"; Ginger Assadi, "Upholding the Palestinian Image in Israeli Cinema") and introduce specific issues in Israeli society to complement feature films (Tom Segev, "The Orientals"; Donna Rosenthal, "The Ashkenazim" and "The Mizrahim"; Yitzhak Rabin, "The People and its Army"; Samuel Heilman, "Mikveh: Taking the Plunge" and "Who Are the Haredim?").

Weekly topics range from historical memory and wartime experience to national, ethnic and religious identity. We will be examining these issues specifically in the context of Israeli film and society, but we will maintain a broad perspective that considers how these shared human concerns and beliefs translate across cultures, texts and films. Students will be encouraged to reflect on and interpret the particularity and universality of the experiences represented in these films, both in class discussions and in writing, in their film journals.

A significant amount of class time will be dedicated to the discussion of films and texts, interspersed with film clips. Discussions will model the kind of critical analysis that is expected in written assignments, help students develop the vocabulary to talk about film in a serious manner, and encourage students to interact with each other and engage with each others' reactions and ideas. Typically, the instructor will organize discussions around particular themes, but students will contribute their own questions each week as part of their film journals.

Written assignments and evaluations throughout the quarter are designed to encourage students to think and write critically about film as an art form and film as a window to a different culture and society. Weekly film journals will ask students to analyze assigned films and readings in response to guiding questions and to reflect on topics of their own choosing. We will spend time in class discussing effective strategies to analyze and write about film, developing strong arguments, and revising film journals, particularly during the first weeks of the quarter. Over the ten week-quarter, these journals will give each student the opportunity to find her or his own perspective and voice as an informed observer, with weekly feedback from the instructor and occasional feedback from peers. Periodic quizzes will ask students to respond to specific questions about assigned films and readings for a given week, such as evaluating specific aesthetic aspects of a film, putting a work in historical and artistic context, interpreting plot and character motivations, and comparing different texts and films. The final exam will include short identifications and questions about various films and readings covered over the course of the quarter, as well as longer essay questions that ask students to synthesize course material by comparing and contrasting different films, themes, and techniques. Students will need to use the critical viewing, thinking and writing skills that they have developed during the quarter to analyze how film represents major issues in Israeli society and broader human values, beliefs, and behaviors.

## Course Assessment Plan for Hebrew 245

### *Assessment Goals and Objectives*

1. Students will view and interpret a wide variety of films, and learn to understand them in the contexts of international cinema and Israeli culture.
2. Students will learn general principles and strategies of film analysis through which they can appreciate and begin to understand film in general and specific cultural aspects of Israeli film.
3. Students will acquire a basic understanding of the relationship between film and society, considering what topics and themes are presented on screen, how they are artistically conveyed, and what effects they have on their audience.
4. Students will examine how Israeli history and Israeli life are explored through film.
5. Students will develop their critical and analytic abilities, as well as work on the clarity and precision of their writing.

### *Methods*

The course's success in meeting these objectives will be assessed by examining written work and by soliciting feedback from the students. Questions posed as part of the weekly film journals will encourage students to think critically about film (objectives 1 & 2) and the relationship between film and society (objectives 3 & 4) The instructor will respond in writing to each students with comments to help guide analysis and writing, and will model analysis during class discussions. This will prepare students for exam questions that target the same objectives such as comparing the artistic and technical aspects of two or more different films; examining how a given film represents a historical event or period; tracing the evolution of certain themes in Israeli film. Students' critical and analytic abilities (objective 5) will be evaluated by the weekly writing assignments as well as in the final exam. The course instructor will compare a random sample of film journals (one from the first 2 weeks of the quarter; one from the middle week of the quarter; one from the last 2 weeks of the quarter) and exam essays written by 10% of the class to gauge how student skills in film analysis and critical writing develop over the course of the quarter. This sampling will focus on whether students understand the nature of the questions being asked and the kind of critical responses that are expected. The instructor will work to address conceptual (such as

understanding film terms or Israeli history), analytical (such as developing strong arguments, evidence, clear prose), and pragmatic (such as attendance, understanding assignments) areas that do not show improvement over the course of the quarter and in the future.

The course will also provide several opportunities for students to assess the course and their performance. Students will be asked to describe their expectations for the course at the beginning of the quarter, which will be saved in the department office. At the end of the quarter, students will get their surveys back, along with an evaluation that asks them to comment on the course, whether or not it has met their expectations, what they liked the most and least, and if they have suggestions for improvement. These evaluations will also be stored in the department office.