

Israeli Film & Society
Hebrew 245

Instructor: Professor Naomi Brenner
Office Hours: TBA
Office: 315 Hagerty Hall, 1775 College Rd.
Email: brenner.108@osu.edu
Phone: 614-292-8953 (department secretary 292-9255)
Mailbox: NELC office, 300 Hagerty Hall

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.

In this course, we 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. From early Israeli films, with low budgets and rudimentary technique, to recent “blockbusters” (at least in terms of the Israeli marketplace), we will consider the art of filmmaking as well as the different insights films provide about Israeli life and identity.

This course is designed for anyone interested in experiencing a wide variety of perspectives on Israeli culture and society, and assumes no previous knowledge about Israel. All films will include English subtitles and assigned readings will address Israeli cinema as well as related historical and social issues.

This course fulfills the 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.

Arts and Humanities Category 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.

COURSE GOALS

- ❖ To analyze Israeli films from a variety of perspectives, including themes (dramatic structure, historical events, characterization, setting, symbolism); visual elements (cinematography, editing, visual effects, lighting); sound and music; and ideology (political, moral, philosophical and social statements).
- ❖ To understand the development of the Israeli film industry, and its place in Israeli culture and society.
- ❖ To examine Israeli history and society through the prism of film, tracing the changing representations of major issues such as Zionism, Israeli identity, the immigrant experience, and the Arab-Israeli conflict.

CLASS STRUCTURE

This course focuses on film, so a significant amount of class time will be dedicated to watching and discussing feature films as well as a wide variety of film clips.

Mondays/Tuesdays will be primarily screening days, while Wednesdays/Thursdays will be analysis and discussion days. Attendance – with eyes open – is critical to success in this class. Missed screenings must be made up by students (films on reserve at Sullivant Library) before the scheduled discussion day.

COURSE READER AND OTHER MATERIALS:

A course reader is required, and can be purchased at SBX, 1806 N. High St. Additional readings, clips, and resources will be available on Carmen. Please make sure that you have access to this class on Carmen and let me know *immediately* if you have trouble accessing the course website.

Reading assignments will vary in length, depending on the topic and the difficulty of the text. Be sure to start **early** with the readings; if you leave everything to the night before, there will be too much to read.

Readings must be **completed by the day that they are assigned**. Please be sure to bring the assigned readings to class, because we will be referring to the text in our discussions.

REQUIREMENTS

Participation & Preparation

- Watch all of the films, keeping the guiding questions (posted weekly on Carmen) in mind. Be sure to take notes for future reference in discussions and writing assignments. This will help you improve your ability to analyze, appreciate and interpret the films that we focus on.
- Complete the assigned reading *before* class. Make sure to pace yourself – don't leave everything to the night before or the day of class because you'll have too much to process effectively.
- Participate in class discussions and in-class groups. This course revolves around class screenings and discussions of films, an essential part of developing skills for film analysis. Come to class prepared to be an active participant: ready to talk about the films and readings, to consider different viewpoints and to ask questions. You will be graded on how you engage the material and other students, not how much you know about the subject. Not everyone feels comfortable participating in class, but if it's difficult for you to speak up in discussions, try to show your interest and preparation by asking questions, taking an active role in group work, and speaking to me outside of class.

Quizzes

- Brief quizzes will be given 6-8 times over the course of the quarter. These quizzes will cover the week's film and readings, focusing on the main points of the material for the week. Quiz questions will ask you to respond aesthetically to a film, put a work in historical and artistic context, interpret plot and character motivations, and compare assigned readings and films. The lowest quiz grade will be dropped at the end of the quarter.

Film Journals

- Weekly film journals (typed, 800-1000 words, approximately 2-3pp double-spaced) will be due each Monday/Tuesday. These journals will be your opportunity to analyze assigned films and readings; to interpret the historical, psychological and artistic dimensions of these films; to reflect on your own reactions to the visual images and performances that you see; and to pose questions. They will help you develop your own perspective as a film viewer, emphasizing critical seeing, reading, thinking and writing. You will be able to choose one of several questions to respond to (posted weekly on Carmen), or to

write about a topic of your choice. Film journals will be evaluated based on the strength of their arguments, their use of appropriate examples from the films and texts, and their clear and concise writing. See attached guidelines for Film Journals.

Final Exam

- A cumulative final exam will be given at the end of the quarter during the university scheduled time. It 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 you to synthesize course material by comparing and contrasting different films, themes, and techniques. No make-up exams will be given.

Final grades will be calculated as follows:

Participation	10%
Quizzes	15%
Film Journals	45%
Final Exam	30%

Grading scale: A (94-100) A- (90-93) B+ (87-89) B (83-86) B- (80-82) C+ (77-79) C (73-76) C- (70-72) D+ (67-69) D (63-66) D- (60-63) E (below 60)

CLASS POLICIES

Absences: To do well in this class, you need to be present and awake. Since things come up (illness, family issues, other commitments), you may be absent **two times** without penalty. After those two absences, each addition unexcused absence will lower your overall grade, up to 5% per unexcused absence. This could potentially have a **major** effect on your grade – in fact, you could fail the class for missing too many classes.

- After 2 absences, please let me know **by email** if you need to miss class, preferably ahead of time. If you are ill for a significant period of time, or have other reasons that prevent you from attending class, please let me know as soon as possible. I will decide the grade penalty (up to 5% per absence) that will apply.
- 3-4 late arrivals or early departures (without explanation) will count as an absence.
- Sleeping through class lectures, discussion or film screenings will be treated like late arrival/early departure, which means the 3-4 occurrences will count as an absence.
- You are responsible for all material that you miss in class, including films, film clips, lectures, discussions and assignments. Make sure you have the contact

information (email, phone number) for one or two other students in class so that you can get the information that you need.

In Class: Please do not read newspapers, email, websites, text messages, etc. during class. If I believe that you are using a computer for reasons other than taking notes or referring to course information, I will restrict your use of computers in class.

Class Cancellations: If an emergency arises and I need to cancel class, I will send an email to the class, and ask that a sign be posted on the door. Please try to check your email before class in case anything comes up.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism – the representation of someone else’s words or ideas as one’s own – is a very serious offense, and will result in serious consequences. By plagiarism, I mean failing to acknowledge someone else’s work or ideas (word for word or paraphrasing), as well as cheating on quizzes and tests. All suspected cases of plagiarism will be reported to the Committee on Academic Misconduct.

It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term “academic misconduct” includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct (http://studentaffairs.osu.edu/pdfs/csc_12-31-07.pdf)

This is not to say that you cannot use other people’s ideas, just that you must **acknowledge** your sources (orally or with footnotes) and try to **build** on those ideas (agree, disagree, modify, give your own examples). Please come and talk to me if you have any questions about this.

Writing Center: The Writing Center (www.cstw.osu.edu) is a great (free!) resource on campus for helping improve your writing skills and work on specific assignments. You can set up an appointment or drop in at certain times for one-on-one help with your writing.

Contact Me: Please come talk to me over the course of the quarter if you have any problems or concerns, but also if you have questions or anything else that you’d like to talk about. It’s great to have the opportunity to get to know you outside of class. Office

hours are a good time to catch me, but you can also email me to set up an appointment to talk.

For quick questions or concerns, email (brenner.108@osu.edu) is the best way to reach me. I will do my best to respond within 24 hours.

DISABILITIES

Students with disabilities that have been certified by the Office for Disability Services will be appropriately accommodated, and should inform the instructor as soon as possible of their needs.

The Office for Disability Services is located in 150 Pomerene Hall, 1760 Neil Avenue; telephone 292-3307, TDD 292-0901;

<http://ods.osu.edu/>

SCHEDULE

Reading assignments are subject to modification, but any changes will be announced at least a week in advance. Remember, all readings are to be completed **before** the date indicated and **brought to class** for discussion.

Week 1 – Introduction to Israeli Film and Society

1. Overview of course and class policies.
Why Israeli film?
Excerpts from *Israel Our Home* (2007), *Black over White* (2008), *Channels of Rage* (2003)
2. *This is Our Land* (1922)
Herbert Freedman, "Film Production in Palestine" *Sight and Sound* (Autumn 1948)
Joseph M. Boggs, "Comprehensive List of Questions for Analysis" *The Art of Watching Film* (269-288)

Week 2 – Heroism in Action

1. *Hill 24 Doesn't Answer* (1955)
David Ben-Gurion, "The War of Independence," in Rabinovich and Reinhartz, *Israel in the Middle East* (74-83)
Timothy Corrigan, "Film Terms and Topics for Film Analysis and Writing" *A Short Guide to Writing about Film* (35-55)
2. Excerpts from *Operation Thunderbolt* (1977)
Ella Shohat, "Israel" Luhr, *World Cinema Since 1945* (330-346)
Timothy Corrigan, "Film Terms and Topics for Film Analysis and Writing" *A Short Guide to Writing about Film* (55-78)

Week 3 – "Bourekas" and Other Entertaining Stereotypes

1. *Sallah Shabbati* (1964)
Tom Segev, "The Orientals" (244-250)
Ella Shohat, "The 'Bourekas' and Sephardi Representation" *Israeli Cinema* (115-130)
2. Excerpts from *Charly and a Half* (1974)
Emmanuel Marx, "The Development Town," in Rabinovich and Reinhartz, *Israel in the Middle East* (158-163)

Ella Shohat, "The 'Bourekas' and Sephardi Representation" *Israeli Cinema* (130-155)

Week 4 – An Israeli West Side Story? Israel and American Movies

1. *Kazablan* (1973)
Donna Rosenthal, "The Ashkenazim" and "The Mizrahim" *The Israelis* (97-129)
2. Excerpts from *West Side Story* (1961)
"The Shot: Mise-en-Scene" *How to Read a Film* (175-200)

Week 5 – Coming of Age

1. *Noa at 17* (1982)
James Monaco, "The Shot: Mise-en-Scene" *How to Read a Film* (200-228)
2. Excerpts from *Hamsin* (1982)
Nurith Gertz, "Historical Memory: Israeli Cinema and Literature in the 1980s and 1990s," in Avruch & Zenner, *Critical Essays on Israeli Society, Religion and Government* (200-226)

Week 6 – War and its Confusions

1. *Avanti Popolo* (1986)
Yael Dayan, "Victory," *The Jewish Experience* (346-254)
2. Excerpts from *Beaufort* (2007); *Yossi and Jagger* (2002)
Yitzhak Rabin, "The People and its Army" *Israel: Its Politics and Philosophy* (312-317)
Daniel Bar-Tal and Yona Teichman, "Representation of Arabs in Cultural Products – Israeli Films" *Stereotypes and Prejudice in Conflict* (201-207)

Week 7 – Israeli Jews and Palestinians

1. *Beyond the Walls* (1984)
"We are at a Crossroads," Interview with Azmi Bishara in Diament, *Zionism: The Sequel* (279-286)
Ginger Assadi, "Upholding the Palestinian Image in Israeli Cinema," Interview with Mohammad Bakri, *Cineaste* 2004 (41-43)

2. Excerpts from *Fictitious Marriage* (1988)
David Grossman, Chapter 8, *Bird on a Wire* (139-161)

Week 8 – Tensions Within

1. *Late Marriage* (2001)
Lilly Weissbrod, "Israeli Identity in Transition," in Karsh, *From Rabin to Netanyahu* (47-65)
2. Anna Isakova, "The Goldfish and the Jewish Problem," in Hazony, *New Essays on Zionism* (221-251)

Week 9 – Religious Worlds

1. *Ushpizin* (2004)
Samuel Heilman, "Mikveh: Taking the Plunge" (3-10), Samuel Heilman, "Who Are the Haredim?" *Defenders of the Faith* (11-24; 28-39)
2. Excerpts from *Campfire* (2004)
Amos Oz, "Thank God for His Daily Blessings," *In the Land of Israel* (3-23)

Week 10 – Contemporary Israeli Film

1. *Noodle* (2007)
Hannah Brown, "Israeli Cinema Has Arrived" (March 25, 2007)
<http://www.israel21c.org/bin/en.jsp?enDispWho=Views^l292&enPage=BlankPage&enDisplay=view&enDispWhat=object&enVersion=0&enZone=Views>
Explore the Israeli Film Fund website:
<http://www.filmfund.org.il/page.aspx?section=141>
2. Looking Backwards and Forwards

