

Israeli Society: Via the Lens of Israeli Film
SOC 178

American Jewish University Campus in Israel
Young Judeaea Year Course

Course Description

The course offers a general introduction to the primary themes in Israeli cinema. Through documentary and feature films, the course will introduce the students to the leading currents in Israeli film productions, with an emphasis on their sociological and political commentaries. Each meeting will include screening and analyzing scenes from various films followed by group discussion.

Goals

1. To introduce students to the Israeli cinema, and an understanding of key terminology that represents core features of Israeli society.
2. To explore the cinematic medium in order to broaden students' understanding of the social-political-historic context in which Israeli films are made.
3. To develop students' analytical skills in evaluating and critiquing films even beyond the classroom.

Academic Requirements

1. Full attendance in class and participation in class discussion (30% of the final grade)
2. Mid-term Exam (30% of the final grade)
3. A Take-Home Exam in the form of an essay question that will integrate at least two of the issues from class discussions (40% of the final grade).

Class Sessions

1. Introduction- the Zionist narrative and the three core myths of Israeli society- 'the Zabar', immigration, and 'the melting pot.'

Reading:

Almog, Oz. 2000. *The Sabra: the creation of the new Jew*. California: University of California Press. Chapter 1/a: The Zionist religion

2. The importance of 'the group' in Israeli cinema- examining the power balance between the collective and the individual.

3. The social role of the 'social sectors cinema'- from stereotypical representation of movies in the 1970's to the multi cultural cinema of the 21st century.

Reading

Shochat, Ella. 1989. *Israeli cinema: East /west and the politics of representation*. Austin: University of Texas Press, Chapter 1: Introduction

4. Immigration- the ideological changes in Israeli society in relation to immigration to and from Israel.
5. The Holocaust- the changes in cinematic depiction of the Holocaust throughout the existence of Israel.

Reading:

Gertz, Nurith. 2005. "The early cinema as silencer of memory". *Shofar- An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies*, 24(1): 67-80

6. War- the changing depiction of war, from heroic-patriotic, to the outcast and strange, to the trilogy of films about Lebanon in the 21st century.

Reading:

Almog, Oz. 2000. *The Sabra: the creation of the new Jew*. California: University of California Press. Chapter 2/h: The Myth of Sabra-warrior and his symbolic props.

7. The Jewish-Arab conflict- the changes in portrayal of Arabic characters in Israeli cinema throughout the years and the political views expressed through it. (2 classes)

Reading:

Almog, Oz. 2000. *The Sabra: the creation of the new Jew*. California: University of California Press. Chapter 5/d: The Sabra as a conqueror.

8. The Kibbutz, the group and the individual- the changes in the depiction of the Kibbutz as a representative of the crisis in the flagship project of the Zionist project.

Reading:

Almog, Oz. 2000. *The Sabra: the creation of the new Jew*. California: University of California Press. Chapter 7/a: The community of the Kibbutz

9. Jewish identity versus Israeli identity- a discussion about the lack of Jewish content in the Israeli cinema and the growing use of religious characters from the 1990's onwards.
10. Women and femininity- the changes in depiction of women in the

cinema; the transition from 'silent presence' to center stage.

11. Israel through the TV screen- The representation of Israeli reality through dramatic series and comedy. (Over 2 classes)
12. Conclusion- Examination of relationship between two time factors: the historic time factor of the state of Israel and the time factor of Israeli cinema and all its developmental stages. (Over 2 classes)

Reading:

Ne'eman, Judd. 1995. "The empty tomb of the postmodern pyramid: Israeli cinema in the 1980s and the 1990s. In *Documenting Israel*, edited by Charles Berlin. Cambridge: Harvard College Library

Munk, Yael. 2008. "The post-colonial function of the virtual space of television in Israeli Cinema of the 1990s". *Framework*, 49(1): 83-92.

13. Epilogue- Humour in Israeli cinema as a tool for social stress relief, as a tool of social criticism and as an authentic expression of Israeli values.
14. Viewing two films: 'He walked in the fields' (1967, starring Asi Dayan) and 'Life according to Agfa' (1992, directed by Asi Dayan).

Bibliography

Barzel, Esther, "Co-existence Between Jews and Arabs in Film and Television, *Otot*, Vol. 82, 1987, pp. 12-13

Farcheck, Roni, "The Intimate and the Collective: On Israeli Film and the Subject of the Holocaust", *Dimui* (Image), Vol. 13, 1996, pp. 38-41

Farcheck, Roni, "The Orient in Israeli Film", *Dimui* (Image), Vol. 10, 1995, pp. 52-54

Graetz, Nurit, et al, *Fictitious Views - On Israeli Film*, Tel Aviv, Open University, 1998

Graetz, Nurit, *A Story from the Movies*, Tel Aviv, 1997

Katznelson, Rivka, "Breaking Down the Soul's Walls", *Naamat*, Jan.-Feb. 1985, pp. 21-24

Klein, Uri, "Israeli Film - National or Individual or Between Reality and Delusion" - *Kesher* (Connection), Vol. 31, 2002, pp. 41-49

Orsher, Gidi, "Movies from Life", *Davar*, April 17, 1991, p. 24

Shochat, Elah, *Israeli Film: History and Ideology*, Tel Aviv, Breirot, 1991

Tzimmerman, Moshe, "The History and Ideology of Israeli Film", Monthly Review,
Vol. 110-11, 1987, pp. 62-71