

Hebrew Literature and Humanism

Changing face of the hero

'The Israeli' from Pioneer to Disaffected Youth

Rachel S. Harris
Judaic Studies Department
Humanities - 241

Tel: (518) 442 4134
Email: rsharris@albany.edu

Course Overview

Modern secular Hebrew literature has adopted and transformed traditional biblical images. Taking a humanist approach, this course will explore the changing representation of the hero in Hebrew literature during the sixty year history of the State of Israel. Through plays, short stories, poems, films and novels by a number of different writers, this course will explore major themes in Israeli literature. These themes will include questions of identity for the native born Israeli, the relationship with the land of Israel, responses to the holocaust through the lens of Zionism, reactions to national ideology and the depiction of women Hebrew literature. Literary devices will also be examined such as the use of biblical imagery in a modern secularist context; adopted and reused in a humanist manner, styles of literary writing and the ways in which narrative is constructed.

Students are expected to read a selection of literary texts in Hebrew and critical literature in English each week.

Required Texts

Robert Wistrich and David Ohana *the Shaping of Israeli Identity: Myth Memory and Trauma* Frank Cass, London. 1995

Alan Mintz *The Boom in Contemporary Israeli Fiction* Brandeis Univ. Press, Boston. 1997

הוא הלך בשדות (play form) Moshe Shamir

סוגרים את הים Yehudit Katzir

מר מר A. B. Yehoshua

הקיטנה של קנלר Etgar Keret

A course reader is for sale at Shipmates (at Stuyvesant Plaza, 458-7758) and on Electronic Reserve at the library. Books can be purchased in the Campus Bookstore or borrowed from the University Library.

References for: Charles D Smith *Palestine and the Arab Israeli Conflict* Palgrave Macmillan, London. 2001 have been provided. Students DO NOT have to read this material, however, the book is a reference point for information of further interest. Copies are on reserve at the library.

Course Requirements:

Students are expected to attend all class meetings. Attendance will be taken periodically. Without proper notification and documentation *ahead* of time when feasible, failure to attend more than two class meetings will result in your final grade being lowered by one full letter grade.

Grade made up of:

2 assessed essays 15% each

Mid term 20%

Final exam 30%

20% class mark, made up of attendance, participation and presentation

There will be no quizzes, but all Hebrew material is to have been prepared before hand, class participation is a requirement! Each week one student will prepare a brief presentation about the relevant theme or specific text, to be prearranged.

A list of questions will be provided for the essays alternatively, students may suggest a substitute title which must be approved in advance with me. Each essay will be 1500-2000 words (6-8 pages double spaced). When citing the literature in Hebrew students are expected to quote their own translations, but should refer to the Hebrew text for references, such as page number (for short stories or novels) or line number (for poetry).

In the course reader there will be Hebrew texts and critical texts with questions in order to focus the readings.

ESSAYS:

Choose one question to answer and discuss in reference to at least one literary prose text studied in class or at least two poems.

Questions for first essay: Due Friday..... start of class

1. Who is “the *Sabra*” and how is he described in the literature of the 1940s and 1950s? Discuss.
2. How are women presented in the pioneer and early state literature?
3. Why are biblical allusions used in Modern Hebrew literature?
4. What themes dominate representations of the Holocaust in Hebrew literature?

Questions for second essay: Due Fridaystart of class

1. “Zionism is about capturing land” Discuss.
2. Michael Feige has defined the particular Zionist narrative concisely as one that: relates to the greatness of the Israelite nation in ancient times; the two thousand years of exile during which the people suffered and forfeited its national greatness until the glorious return to the ancient land; in sum, it is a process characterized by sacrifice and heroism.¹
3. Analyse one literary reaction to the national narrative and explain how it responds to the accepted hegemony.
4. What is the impact of narrative style on the story told? Discuss in relation to the novel *Mar Mani*.
5. Are female character’s powerless? Consider the female in the poetry of Yona Wallach or the writing of Yehudit Katzir.

¹ Feige, Michael “Introduction: Rethinking Israeli Memory and Identity” *Israel Studies Vol 7 No 2* (Summer 2002) p. v-vi

EXAMS:

The midterm will be made up of one general question relating to themes studied in the course in the first half of the semester and one specific question relating to a text. **In class, Friday**

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The final will be made up of one general question relating to themes studied in the entire course and a choice of two questions (only write on one) on specific literary texts.

Other information:

Respect and tolerance for all viewpoints as well as courteous and attentive behaviour are expected from all class participants. Anyone who fails to adhere to these standards may be required to leave the class at my discretion.

Support: If you are having any difficulties in the course, I encourage you to contact me sooner rather than later so that we can devise a work plan and strategies so that you can be successful in the course.

Grading: I strive to be fair and accurate in grading student assignments. If you are dissatisfied with a grade that you have received, please present to me *in writing* what error you feel has been made and what course of action you propose for remedying it. Then, please visit my office during regular office hours (or contact me to make an appointment) and we will discuss your concerns. Additionally, if you wish to have your final exam returned, please contact me during the first week of the new semester to arrange for the exam to be returned to you. It is my policy *not* to leave student work in public places for pick up. I do not give out or discuss grades over email.

Percentage % **Grading Bands**

96-100	A+	Excellent knowledge of subject. Critical awareness of
91-95	A	academic debate with excellent use of evidence to illustrate
86-90	A-	argument. Appropriate contextualization of material.
81-85	B+	Good knowledge of subject. Clear awareness of debate, with
76-80	B	appropriate use of evidence. Some awareness of larger
71-75	B-	historical context. Accurate use of appropriate terms.
66-70	C+	Displays factual knowledge of subject. Some evidence of
61-65	C	discussion and awareness of different points of view. Adequate
56-60	C-	documentation. Some use of appropriate terms
51-55	D+	Poor knowledge of subject. Poor presentation of work.
46-50	D	Limited, incorrect or no use of appropriate terms. Minimal
41-45	D-	discussion.
40 or below	FAIL	Work below minimum standard required.

Academic Integrity: The University at Albany adheres to the following policy regarding intellectual honesty: "It is every student's responsibility to become familiar with the standards of academic integrity at the University. Claims of ignorance, of unintentional error or of academic or personal pressures are not sufficient reasons for violations of academic integrity." Plagiarism and other violations of the rules of academic integrity are treated seriously. See the university's policy on plagiarism at:

http://www.albany.edu/undergraduate_bulletin/regulations.html#plagiarism

Learning Disabilities: If you are a student with a documented learning disability, please inform me immediately so that we can make arrangements to accommodate your needs. If you suspect that you may have learning disability but do not have it documented, please contact the Disabled Student Services located in Campus Center, Room 127 (442-5490).

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Hebrew 308
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Primary Texts

- הוא הלך בשדות (play form) Moshe Shamir
- מגש הכסף, האשה Natan Alterman
- הנשכחים Haim Gouri,
- נראות המצבות כלהקת חסידות Ronny Somek מרחוק
- כתוב בעפרון בקרון החתום Dan Pagis
- "The Parable of the Old Man and the Young" Wilfred Owen
- ואחי שותק Amir Gilboa יצחק,
- Genesis 24: 1-24
- ירושה Haim Gouri
- העקדה של האמיתי של העקדה Yehuda Amichai הגיבור
- המטומטם הזה יצחק Yizhak Laor
- דרך הרוח Amos Oz דרך
- החיילים יצאו לדרך Yona Wallach אבשלום, תפילין,
- גשם Amichai
- Biblical Extract 2 Samuel
- מים Yehezkel Rahamim

Secondary Texts

- Yudkin, Leon "A New Beginning" *Jewish Writing and Identity in the Twentieth Century*
- Zerubavel, Yael. *Recovered Roots: Collective memory and the making of Israeli national tradition*. Chicago ; London: University of Chicago Press, 1995. pp. 60-76
- Almog, Oz *The Sabra* (selected readings) pp 76-82 and 90-106
- *Recovered Roots* Yael Zerubavel (selected readings) pp 192-213
- Handelman, Don; Shamgar-Handelman, Lea. "The Presence of Absence." In *Grasping Land*, edited by Eyal Ben-Ari; Yoram Bilu. Albany, New York: SUNY Press, 1997.
- Nurit Gertz *Myths in Israeli Culture* pp. 1-26,
- Amos Elon, *The Israelis Founders and Sons* (selection) pp. 353
- Feldman, Yael *No Room of their Own* pp. 1-42

ADDITIONAL READING:

This is a selection of readings recommended according to topic. These books will be particularly useful for answering essay questions.

General reading:

Yudkin, Leon I. *1948 and After: Aspects of Israeli fiction, Journal of Semitic Studies. Monograph; no. 5.* Manchester: University of Manchester, 1984.

Biblical allusions:

Jacobson, David C. *Does David still play before you? : Israeli poetry and the Bible = [Ha-od David Menagen Lefanekha? Shirah Yisreelit veba-Tanakh].* Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1997.

Jacobson, David C. *Modern Midrash:: The Retelling of traditional Jewish Narratives by Twentieth-Century Hebrew Writers, SUNY series in Modern Jewish Literature and Culture.* Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987.

Kartun-Blum, Ruth, and Menashe Kadishman. *Profane Scriptures: Reflections on the Dialogue with the Bible in Modern Hebrew poetry.* Cincinnati, [Ohio]: Hebrew Union College Press, 1999. pp 1-65

Sternberg, Meir. *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading, The Indiana Literary Biblical Series.* Bloomington, Ind: Indiana University Press, 1985.

Women:

Feldman, Yael S. *No Room of Their Own: Gender and Nation in Israeli women's fiction, Gender and culture.* New York: Columbia University Press, 1999.

Kartun-Blum, Ruth, and Menashe Kadishman. *Profane Scriptures: Reflections on the Dialogue with the Bible in Modern Hebrew Poetry.* Cincinnati, [Ohio]: Hebrew Union College Press, 1999. pp 69-97

Kaufman, Shirley, Galit Hasan-Rokem, and Tamar Hess. *The Defiant Muse: Hebrew Feminist Poems from Antiquity to the Present: A Bilingual Anthology, Defiant muse.* New York: Feminist Press at the City University of New York, 1999. pp. Introduction

Holocaust:

James E Young *The Texture of Memory* (1993) pp 243-281

Leon Yudkin, *Hebrew Literature in the Wake of the Holocaust* pp. 9-32

Modernism and Literary style:

Kronfeld, Hana *On the Margins of Modernism*

Gluzman, Michael. *The Politics of Canonicity. Lines of Resistance in Modernist Hebrew Poetry.* Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2003, (selection)