

The City and the Country in Modern Hebrew Literature

[HEB 309]

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There may be no place more blessed--or burdened--with narrative than Israel. In this country, story and place are inextricable. The historical, holy city of Jerusalem is a place where the religious past becomes an oppressive view of the secular present. The modern, secular city of Tel Aviv comes to address a site of ideological conflict. The timeless desert becomes a source of inspiration, while the greenery present through the redemption of the landscape is a constant Zionist theme. Yet there are those too whose cities are not well known, where poverty and unemployment become motivations for questioning the Zionist enterprise. This course looks at the landscape of Israel as the source for a literary discourse and explores the relationship that Israelis have developed with this land.

Students are expected to read a selection of literary texts in Hebrew and critical literature in English each week. There will also be two films screened as part of the course.

Required Texts

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.

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 20% each

Mid term 20%

Final exam 20%

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).

A comprehensive guide to essay writing and presentation can be found in the course reader.

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 17th February 2006 at the start of class

1. How is Jerusalem represented?
2. Discuss the international character of Jerusalem as presented by Yehuda Amichai.
3. What is the relationship between Hannah Gonen's psychological state and the depiction of Jerusalem in the film *My Michael*?
4. What is Amos Oz's vision of Jerusalem?

Questions for second essay: Due Friday 28th April 2006 start of class

1. Tel Aviv is the first Jewish City in two thousand years. Discuss the relationship between the ideological construction of Tel Aviv and the depiction of the city in literature.
2. What is the relationship between the city and the country in Hebrew literature?
3. "The desert offered a unique environment for posing critical questions about the individual and society," in what way is this true?
4. According to Hannah Wirth-Nesher Joyce's Dublin is mediated through language, while Bashevis Singer's Warsaw is mediated through history. Any representation of the city, what Mann has called the "recognised cultural meanings," is related through relativism. Discuss representations of one city in Israel.

EXAMS:

The midterm will be made up of a close reading of one poem, and a choice of essay questions, students must write two essays, one responding to a general question relating to themes studied in the course and one in relation to a specific text(s) or texts studied in the first half of the semester. **In class, Friday 31st March 2006**

The final will take the same format.

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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ADDITIONAL READING:

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

Yehuda Amichai

- Abramson, Glenda. *The Experienced Soul: Studies in Amichai, Modern Hebrew Classics*. Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1997.
- . *The Writing of Yehuda Amichai: A Thematic Approach, Suny Series in Modern Jewish Literature and Culture*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989.
- Amichai, Yehuda, and Joseph Cohen. *Voices of Israel: Essays on and Interviews with Yehuda Amichai, A.B. Yehoshua, T. Carmi, Aharon Appelfeld and Amos Oz, Suny Series in Modern Jewish Literature and Culture*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990.

Amos Oz

- Oz, Amos. *In the Land of Israel*. 1st ed. San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983.
- . *Israel, Palestine and Peace*. London: Vintage, 1994.
- Oz, Amos, and Nicholas De Lange. *My Michael*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1972.
- Oz, Amos, and Hillel Halkin. *A Perfect Peace*. London: Flamingo, 1986.

Mizrachi Voices

- Keys to the Garden: New Israeli Writing*, ed. Ammiel Alacalay, San Francisco: City Lights, 1996

Land and Memory in Israel

- Almog, Oz. *The Sabra: The Creation of the New Jew, S. Mark Taper Foundation Imprint in Jewish Studies*. Berkeley; London: University of California Press, 2000. (Chapter 4)
- Ben-Ari, Eyal, and Yoram Bilu. *Grasping Land: Space and Place in Contemporary Israeli Discourse and Experience, Suny Series in Anthropology and Judaic Studies*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997.
- Omer-Sherman, Ranen. "Desert Space and National Consciousness: The Circuitous Journey of the Citizen-Soldier in Amos Oz's *A Perfect Peace*" *Israel in Exile: Jewish Writing and the Desert* Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2006.
- Walkowitz, Daniel J., and Lisa Maya Knauer. *Memory and the Impact of Political Transformation in Public Space, Radical Perspectives*. Durham, N.C.; London: Duke University Press, 2004.
- Zerubavel, Yael. *Recovered Roots: Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition*. Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1995.

Israeli Cinema

- Kronish, Amy. *World Cinema: Israel*. Teaneck: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1996.
- Shohat, Ella. *Israeli Cinema: East/West and the Politics of Representation*. 1st ed. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1989.

The City and the Country

- Williams, Raymond. *The Country and the City*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1973.
- Wirth-Nesher, Hana. *City Codes: Reading the Modern Urban Novel*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.