Hebrew Literature and Humanism

Changing face of the hero
'The Israeli' from Pioneer to Disaffected Youth

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Humanities - 241

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
(מִשְׁפָּטִים) Moshe Shamir
(סְמוּרים אֲחַר הָלָם) Yehudit Katzir
(מֶר מִנֵי) A. B Yehoshua
(,image) 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 Friday ……start 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.

¹Feige, 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**

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**

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

Course Information

Essay Writing Guide

Class Schedule

Primary Texts

• הרה הלך בשדות (play form) Moshe Shamir
• הנשה המכבה, האשה Natan Alterman
• נשיאת הנסיך Haim Gouri
• תרבות המ生物科技 cdתكة הת销售收入 Ronny Somek
• חותם בפספרא בקור ו לעמוד Dan Pagis
• “The Parable of the Old Man and the Young” Wilfred Owen
• כולם, או אחרиш טק שבח Amir Gilboa
•Genesis 24: 1-24
• ירושה Haim Gouri
• להובר האמתיות של העידות Yehuda Amichai
• המشعبון והוד צחק Yizhak Laor
• דרך הנהר Amos Oz
• אבשלום, חפלון, והחיילים צא אחר Yona Wallach
• גשם Amichai
• Biblical Extract 2 Samuel
•Ｇשם Yehezkel Rahamim

Secondary Texts

• Yudkin, Leon “A New Beginning” Jewish Writing and Identity in the Twentieth Century
• Almog, Oz The Sabra (selected readings) pp 76-82 and 90-106
• Recovered Roots Yael Zerubavel (selected readings) pp 192-213
• 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:

Biblical allusions:

Women:

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