**Popular Culture in Israel and Palestine**

**MidEast 377, 4 cr, AT, G**

**Class number 32696**

# Professor Gershenson

# Meeting time: Wednesday 4:00-6:45, Herter Hall 222

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Office Hours: Tuesday 3:45-5:00 and Wednesday 3:00-4:00

**What is this course about?**

This course will use popular culture to discuss an array of issues defining Israeli and Palestinian societies. We will examine Israeli-Palestinian relations through a lens of cultural expressions and practices. Such an approach will give us an understanding of the region beyond news headlines and will allow us to have both an Israeli and a Palestinian perspective. We focus on popular culture because it appeals to large groups of people, and so learning about it provides a useful way to better understand Israelis and Palestinians.

The course will cover film, music, visual arts, literature, food, internet, and mass media. Discussion will be structured around the following major themes: cultural exchanges and appropriations; borders and walls; and finally, terror and trauma. All readings and film excerpts are with English translation.

This is a General Education course. It satisfies the requirements in the Arts and Literature area of the General Education curriculum because by studying popular culture in Israel and Palestine, we will consider the production, performance, function and aesthetic evaluation of various art forms in relation to one another and to the societies that produce them. But this course is also designed not only to give students an understanding of its contents, but also to practice a certain style of discourse—a dialog. Part of the class will focus on creating an environment in which an honest and productive discussion of contested issues is possible. Understanding how conflicting narratives are formed, and approaching a charged subject from the politically and ideologically opposite vantage points is an important learning outcome. This is why this course satisfies a Global Social and Cultural Diversity requirements.

**Text:**

* Stein R. and T. Swedenburg. *Palestine, Israel, and the Politics of Popular Culture*. Duke UP, 2005. ISBN 0822335166. Available at Amazon
* Articles on the Moodle—please print out and bring to class
* Articles and comments on class blog/Facebook group
* Films, materials, and handouts distributed in class/posted on Moodle

**What to expect?**

Readings are assigned every class, and understanding them is crucial. Therefore, there will be questions about every reading. Use these questions to guide your reading, and to formulate answers or your own questions—questions about things that were unclear or questions that you want to discuss further. If you have a question, make sure you ask it—in class, on Moodle, or on blog/Facebook group.

Active participation is a key: during our time together we will share our ideas, discuss them, maybe disagree about some. Come to class ready to do all of that. Don’t kick back and relax, this is a class, not a TV show.

**Plagiarism**

I am sure that you will do honest academic work, but I have to remind you that plagiarism and cheating are not condoned and are subject to academic penalty. The penalty for plagiarism is failure for the course. For your information, plagiarism may be in the form of copying ideas, words or speeches of another person or another source (such as the internet, a book, an article or a paper) without clearly citing your source.

**Assignments and grading:**

*Participation-15%*

Students are expected to attend the class meetings and all other activities connected to class, such as film screenings—on Moodle, in class, or at other locations. Participation means an active engagement in class discussion. In other words, a mere physical presence in class does not count as participation.

*Mid-term Project-25%*

Mid-term project is a creative and interactive presentation related to class material, usually based on a film, a music album, or another cultural product. All films/cultural products have to be approved by instructor.

*Media Production-30%*

During the semester each student will post a weekly response to a professor’s or another student’s posting. At least once a semester a student will make their own posting on the class blog/Facebook group, to which everyone else will respond. The posting will consist of material from printed or electronic media, and student’s introduction establishing its relevance to the class readings as well as questions for discussion. All students are required to read professor’s and each others’ postings, follow links, and post comments.

*Final Project-30%*

Final paper will be a review of a film, a music album, or another cultural product, which directly deals with the classroom material. The review will include an analysis and interpretation of a subject, and is expected to be written like a review that one could read in a high-brow magazine. In other words, this assignment is both academic and creative. All topics must be approved by professor.

Additional directions and consultations will be provided for each assignment.

**Schedule**

(like everything else in life—subject to change)

Week 1

Sept 9 Introductions to the class and to the blog/Facebook group

Why popular culture?

Stein and Swedenburg, Introduction. TEXT

Pappe, I. Chronology. In Pappe, I. *A History of Modern Palestine: One Land, Two People.* Cambridge UP, 2004. MOODLE

Film: *Band’s Visit*

Week 2

Sept 16 Primer on Israeli/Palestinian history: maps, demographics, major events

Regev, M. and E. Seroussi. A Short Introduction to Israeli Culture. In their *Popular Music and National Culture in Israel*. U of California Press, 2004. MOODLE

Sa’di, A. Reflections on Representation, History, and Moral Accountability. In A. Sa’di and Abu-Lughod, L. *Nakba: Palestine, 1948, and the Claims of Memory*. Columbia UP, 2007. MOODLE

**I. Exchange, appropriation, transformation**

Week 3

Sept 23 No class, Yom Kippur, alternative assignment will be given instead of class

Week 4

Sept 30 – “Borrowing” the elements of identity, in the field and in the kitchen

Zerubavel, Y. Memory, the Rebirth of the Native, and the “Hebrew Bedouin” Identity. *Social Research*, 75 (1), Spring 2008. MOODLE

Roden, C. Israel-Forging a National Style with Gefilte Fish and Couscous. In her *The Book of Jewish Food.* Knopf, 2006. MOODLE

Raviv, Y. Falafel: A National Icon, *Gastronomica*, 3 (3), Summer 2003. MOODLE

Week 5.

Oct 7 Musiqa Mizrahit

Regev, M. and E. Seroussi. Musiqa Mizrahit: Origins, Style, Production, and Public. In their *Popular Music and National Culture in Israel*. U of California Press, 2004. MOODLE

Horowitz, Dueling Nativities. TEXT

**II. Borders: walls, barriers**

Week 6

Oct 14 Crossing borders and boundaries on screen **Mid Term assignment is distributed in class**

Bardenstein, Cross/Cast. TEXT

Raz, Y. Homoland: Interracial Sex and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict in Israeli Cinema. *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 8 (4), 2002. MOODLE

Film at home: *Bubble*

Week 7

Oct 21 Checkpoint.

Naaman, D. The Silenced Outcry: A Feminist Perspective from the Israeli Checkpoints in Palestine. *NWSA*, 18 (3), 2006. MOODLE

Azoulay, A. In S. Waked*. Chic-Point*. Andalus Publishing, 2007. MOODLE

Persekian, J. In S. Waked*. Chic-Point*. Andalus Publishing, 2007. MOODLE

Week 8

Oct 28 Food in the borderlands

Gvion, L. Cuisines of poverty as means of empowerment: Arab food in Israel. *Agriculture and Human Values,* 23 (3), 2006. MOODLE

**Individual conferences about mid-term**

Week 9

Nov 4 **Mid term presentations. Final assignment is distributed.**

Week 10

Nov 11 no class, Veteran’s Day

**III. Terror, trauma, memory**

Week 11

Nov 18 Crossing borders, real and imaginary. **Discussion of the final project in class**

Stein, First Contact and Other Israeli Fictions. TEXT

Naaman, D. Elusive Frontiers: Borders in Israeli and Palestinian Cinemas. *Third Text*, 20 (3/4), May/July 2006. MOODLE

Ghanim, H. Being a Border. In Kanaaneh, R. A., Nusair, I., and L. Abu-Lughod. *Displaced at Home : Ethnicity and Gender among Palestinians in Israel*. State University of New York Press , 2010. MOODLE

Film at home: *Syrian Bride*

Week 12

Nov 25 Walled off—Israeli and Palestinian traumas in visual media. NO CLASS, WORK ONLINE

Hashhash, M. On the Visual Representation of Martyrdom in Palestine. *Third Text*, 20 (3/4), May/July 2006. MOODLE

Bresheeth, H. The Nakba Projected: Recent Palestinian Cinema. *Third Text*, 20 (3/4), May/July 2006. MOODLE

Film at home: *Forgiveness*

Week 13

Dec 2 Guest lecture by Dror Mishani: “The Mystery of Hebrew Detective: Genre Literature, Nationalism, and Modernity.”

Mishani, D. Excerpts from *A Missing File* (2014) and *A Possibility of Violence* (2015). MOODLE

Week 14

Dec 9 **Writing Workshop for the final project**