

Israel Stories: Page, Stage, and Screen

Dr. Miryam Sivan

Course Number: 702.2152

Class Time: Tuesday 12:00-15:00

Class Location: TBA

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Stories both reflect and mold our world. And all cultures tell stories to themselves and to others because all people tell stories. Narrative is a fundamental human cognitive ability that enables us to process and make meaning from what we see and experience around us. Within its storylines and frames, we move from the concrete to the abstract, weaving together what is seen, what imagined, what feared, desired, what is difficult to comprehend. Whether meant to be read alone, read aloud, performed or watched on stage or screen, stories function as an entertaining and educative means of introducing people to the beliefs, practices, politics, and mores of a group of people. Stories are windows that allow us to peer into, to move into contact with a particular society.

In this course, we will read and watch contemporary stories by Israeli Jewish and Arab writers and film directors. This will allow a more nuanced and multifaceted understanding of Israel's complex history of identity, place, community, and landscape -- and its continual metamorphosis through time. We will read poems, stories, plays, and novels, we will watch films. All these stories will provide us with an opportunity to not only examine literary, aesthetic, and cinematic qualities, but as importantly, will help us gain insight into the contemporary cultural and political contexts in which these works have been created. (Weekly schedule to be announced closer to semester's start.)

Course Requirements:

- Weekly Reading/Viewing Assignments – most posted on Moodle website
- Weekly Writing Assignments on readings/viewings (Transcription Notes)
- Class Participation
 - Weekly presentation of artist biographies
- Mid-Term Exam (take home essay questions: 1500 words)
- Term Paper (BA students: 2500 words, no secondary sources)
(BA Seminar + MA students: 5000 words, research paper)

Final Grade:

1. Participation & Bios:	10%
2. Transcription Notes:	10%
3. Take-home Midterm:	30%

4. Final Essay: 50%

Introduction to Course

24/2: General survey of the history of the Hebrew language and the implications of its renaissance as a vernacular language. An overview of themes related to the field of study: the relationship of language and identity; the ways the Bible dialogues with contemporary texts; the waves and schools of Hebrew literary writing in the past 140 years; where we are now.

Read and discuss poems Yehuda Amichai (page)

History Animated

3/3: Yehoshua Sobol, *The Night of the Twentieth* (stage)

In this play, the reader zooms in on a specific night in 1920 during the Third Wave of Aliyah. Some of the foundational ideas and myths, desires and fears of Zionism, then and now, are highlighted.

Mahmud Darwish, poems (page)

3/10: A.B. Yehoshua, "Facing the Forests" (page)

Amos Oz, *Longing* (page)

3/17: Yaakov Shapir, "Departures" (page)

Ephraim Kishon, *The Policeman* (screen)

Shoah

3/24: David Grossman, *Momik* (page)

Nava Semel, "Hat of Glass" (page)

3/31: Ari Folman, *Waltz with Bashir* (screen)

PASSOVER BREAK

Women Speak Out

14/4: Kahana-Carmon, "N'ima Sassoon Writes Poems" (page)

Mishol, Wallach -- selected poems (page)

The four writers express a variety of experiences from a woman's point of view: creativity, politics, passion – for the sacred, for the profane. Their work merges a variety of themes and

concerns not traditionally considered at the center of the masculine Israeli experience. We think otherwise.

**21/4: Ronit Elkabatz & Shlomi Elkabatz, *To Take a Wife* (screen)
Gett (screen)**

Arab Voices

28/4: Sayed Kashua, *Dancing Arabs* (page)

**5/5: Tahir Najib, *In Spitting Distance* (stage)
Scandar Copti/Yaron Shani, *Ajami* (screen)**

Other Voices

**12/5: Orly Castell-Bloom, "Ummi Fi Shurl" (page)
Taha Muhammed Ali, poems (page)
Eitan Fox, *The Bubble* (screen)**

**19/5: Giddi Dar, *Ushpizin* (screen)
Zelda, poems (page)**

The Impact of War

**26/5: Samih Al-Qasim, Dalia Rabikovich, poems (page)
Shimon Ballas, "Iya" (page)**

**2/6: Yoram Kaniuk, "Vultures" (page)
Etger Keret, "Cocked and Locked" (page)
Moti Lerner, *Pangs of the Messiah* (stage)**