

Spring 2007

Dr. Nili Gold

**MODERN HEBREW LITERATURE & CULTURE IN TRANSLATION:
LOVE AND WAR IN ISRAELI FILM AND LITERATURE**

NELC-159-401 (Cross listed with CINE-329 COML-282 JWST-154)

Distribution III: Arts & Letters

T/R 1:30 - 3:00 p.m. Van Pelt FILM CR (425)

Office: 707 Williams Hall. Tel: 573-5312 (niligold@sas.upenn.edu)

Office Hours: Tues. 3:00 – 5:00 p.m. (and by appointment)

Taught in English. Texts in translation from Hebrew and Arabic.

Description

While the American tradition sanctifies the "pursuit of happiness," Israeli consciousness does not. The "tug of war" between the individual's right to seek happiness on the one hand, and the commitment to collective, national causes on the other, is an overarching theme in Israeli literary and cinematic works. This struggle, as it is reflected in the arts, crosses lines of gender and genre, age and ethnic background. So deeply ingrained is the superiority of national concerns that a leading Israeli critic accused the renowned author A.B. Yehoshua of "desertion" when he wrote a mere love story.

We will study works of fiction, poetry and film created by Israeli men and women from 1948-2006. Some of the works deal with the relationship between love and war, while others focus on one of the two. Readings include Yehoshua, Oz, Amichai, Ravikovitch and Wieseltier. Films include works by Barbash, Agmon, Ben-Dor & Dotan.

There will be six film screenings; the films will also be placed on reserve at the library for those students unable to attend the screenings. The content of this course changes from year to year, and therefore, students may take it for credit more than once.

Schedule of instruction: Assignments listed are to be completed before days indicated

I. Introduction

1/9 - Historical Background; the Israeli Condition - Living with War
Natan Zach: "Haifa. The Evening Before the Lebanon War"; David Grossman: speech at the Yitzhak Rabin memorial, 2006; Shaul Tchernichovsky: "Behold, O Earth"; Yehuda Amichai: "Two Poems about the First Battles, A.", "My Son was Drafted", "Both Together and Each Apart", "Rain on a Battlefield" (handout)

1/11 Dahlia Ravikovitch: "Lying on the Water"*

II. The 1948 Generation: The Collective Voice, *Akeda* - Sacrifice & Pathos
Additional reading: The "History" subentry in the entry "Israel, the state of" in an encyclopedia of your choice

1/16 Natan Alterman: "The Silver Platter"; Amir Gilboa: "And My Brother Said Nothing"; Haim Gouri: "Heritage"*

1/16 Film: "Exodus" (4:30 – 6:30 pm location TBA)

1/18 *Film Response Paper Due*
Discussion of "Exodus" – heroism in literature and film

Poetry by Natan Alterman, Amir Gilboa, Haim Gouri * (cont.)

III. Questions and Doubts: Encounters with the 'Enemy'

1/23 Benjamin Tammuz: "The Swimming Contest" *

1/25 S. Yizhar: "The Prisoner" *

1/30 S. Yizhar: "The Prisoner" * (cont.)

IV. The "Generation of the State": the Voice of the Individual
The Gap between Literary and Cinematic Expression

2/1 The Banner of the Rebellion: Amichai's "I Want to Die in my Bed" *
REMINDER: start reading *The Lover* by A. B. Yehoshua

2/6 The emergence of the self *vis a vis* the collective: Personal Poems of Amichai and Ravikovitch.

2/6 Film: "Siege" (4:30-6:30pm, location TBA)

2/8 *Film Response Paper Due*
Discussion of "Siege"

V. After the Yom Kippur War: the Writer as the National Conscience

2/13 Parts I-III of *The Lover* by A. B. Yehoshua (you may skip the Veducha chapters)

2/13 Film: "Smile of the Lamb", based on Grossman's novel (4:30 – 6:30 pm location TBA)

2/15 *Film Response Paper Due*
Discussion of the film with its director Shimon Dotan

2/20 Parts IV-V of *The Lover*

2/22 Meir Wieseltier's "A Dull Khaki Light" and other poems: facing a new reality *

Saturday, 2/24 Make-up for Passover (4/3)

"Aviva, my Love": Screening & director's talk at the Israeli Film Festival - International House, 3701 Chestnut Street, 8pm. Free admission for our class, you **MUST RESERVE!**

2/27 *Film Response Paper Due*
Discussion of "Aviva, my Love"

2/28 **Midterm Paper Due by 4:00 p.m. (Instructor's mailbox-WMS Hall, 8th fl.)**

3/1 Yehudit Hendel: "Apples in Honey" *
REMINDER: Begin reading *A Tale of Love and Darkness* (specific sections TBA)

3/6 and 3/8 Spring Break

VI. Love in Spite of War and the Voice of the Child

3/13 In-class reading of excerpts from *Someone to Run with* by D. Grossman

3/13 Film: "Someone to Run with" based on the novel (4:30 – 6:30 pm location TBA)

3/15 *Film Response Paper Due*

Discussion of film with excerpts from the novel: comparing genres

VII. The Interweaving of Jewish and Arab National and Personal Trajectories

3/20 Israeli poetry in Arabic: Naim Araidy: "This is Your Face..." and Siham Daoud: "The Mourning of the Doves"

3/22 Amos Oz: *A Tale of Love and Darkness* (sections from first half of book)

3/27 Amos Oz, continued.

3/27 "Syrian Bride" (4:30-6:30 p m, location TBA)

3/29 *Film Response Paper*

Discussion of "Syrian Bride"

4/3 **Passover, no class. Make-up, February 24th, *Aviva my Love*. Details above**

4/5 Amos Oz: *A Tale of Love and Darkness* (sections from the second half of book)

4/10 **Passover, no class. Make-up April 17th, details below.**

VII. Post-Modernist Literary response to War

4/12 Etgar Keret, selected short stories (handout)

Monday 4/16, 8pm Etgar Keret at Hillel, make-up for Passover (4/10) [Attention: the event is on the 16th at Hillel and not as indicated in the syllabus included in your packet]

4/17 In-class visit by Etgar Keret, discussion of the stories we read

4/19 The state of Israeli literature and the Israeli film Industry in the 21st century

Assessment:

Class preparation & participation (25%): All readings & film viewings must be completed by the dates indicated on the syllabus.

Response Papers (15%): Six 1-page response papers on the films screened, submitted at the beginning of the class immediately following the screening.

Midterm Paper due February 28th at 4pm (30%, hard copy, 5-6 pages): an analysis of either one or two texts (depending on length), or a film and a text; the materials must not

have been studied in class, must be related to a class topic and must include an Israeli component. Paper topics must be approved by instructor. (**See suggested readings incorporated in the syllabus and recommended readings and films below, or consult with instructor**). ALL papers should follow MLA guidelines for writing papers, citing, footnotes, bibliography, etc. Double spaced, 12 point font. Place in instructor's mailbox (NELC office, Williams Hall 8th Floor).

Final Exam (30%): The purpose of the final exam is specifically to assure that you read all the material, including the excerpts from Gershon Shaked's *Modern Hebrew Fiction* in the course packet. It will NOT be an essay-based test.

Texts (Available at [Penn Book Center](#))

David Grossman, *Someone to Run With*

Amos Oz, *A Tale of Love and Darkness*

A.B. Yehoshua, *The Lover*

* In packet of xeroxed material available at [Campus Copy Center](#) (3907 Walnut St.)

Recommended Readings (on reserve, may be used for paper topics):

Glenda Abramson, ed. *The Oxford Book of Hebrew Short Stories*

Robert Alter, "Afterword" in Anderson, Elliot ed. *Contemporary Israeli Literature*

Marguerite Duras, *The Lover*

Yael S. Feldman, *No Room of Their Own: Gender and Nation in Israeli Women's Fiction*

David Grossman, *The Book of Inner Grammar*

Yehudit Katzir, *Closing the Sea*

Amos Oz, *Panther in the Basement*

Amos Oz, *The Hill of Evil Counsel*

Esther Raizen, ed. and trans., *No Rattling of Sabers: An Anthology of Israeli War Poetry*

A.B. Yehoshua, *The Liberated Bride*

A.B. Yehoshua, *Mr. Mani*

Suggested Films (most are on reserve, may be used for paper topics): "No'a at 17"

"Summer Blues" (Bluz la-hofesh ha-gadol)

"Avanti Popolo"

"Beyond the Walls"

"Nina's Tragedies"

"They were Ten"

"Yana's Friends"

"The Song of the Siren"

"Hitchikers"

"Crossfire"

"Hamsin"

"Ha-hesder"

"Because of that War"

"Yossi and Jager"

"Walk on Water"

"Antebe"

"Gone with the Wind"

"Dr. Zhivago"

"Return to India"

"Staying in Haifa" (Nishar be-Haifa- Emil Habibi)