

Longing and Belonging: Literatures of Israel English 398 and Jewish Studies 398

Dr. Holli Levitsky/Loyola Marymount University/Spring 2013

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Course Description and Objectives: In this course, we will investigate modern representations in literature and film of longing for the land of Israel while challenging beliefs about belonging in the land of Israel. For whom is this land the object of longing, and why? Who feels a sense of ownership, or belonging, in the land? Does the feeling of belonging necessarily create an excluded other? How does the longing/belonging dichotomy operate among diasporic writers? Can one feel a belonging for the land while living outside of it, or conversely, can one live in a land and still long for it (or an idealized or imaginary other)?

We will neither solve nor resolve the real-life issues imaginatively realized by these writers and filmmakers. Rather, we will complicate the issues by supplanting a single point of view with a multiplicity of views. Our focus will be on how these issues are presented, not whether someone is right or wrong. That said, we will pay close attention to what these representations—or stories—can tell us about the people narrating them as well as the history and geopolitical possibilities inherent in a future. The themes we will pursue include the Zionist dream, immigration and emigration, displacement, contact between cultures, agency or self-government, the absurdity of life in Israel, the diaspora, among others. We will be investigating these themes through the genres of fiction, poetry, memoir and film.

Prerequisites: Undergraduate with upper division standing or Jewish Studies minor or Graduate Student (petition required). Satisfies Comparative Literature or English Literature elective requirement for the English major and the Arts requirement for Jewish Studies minors. As a discussion-based course, students are required to participate energetically, to show an open heart, a generous spirit, and mutual respect at all times. Several of the required films will need to be viewed on your own.

Assignments:

#1. 1st essay: 500-750 words. After watching the film, *Exodus*, what role did the Holocaust play in creating the modern state of Israel? (due January 28 in class) (10%)

#2. 2nd essay: 750-1000 words. Choose a theme in Amos Oz's *Tale of Love and Darkness* and develop it into an analysis. This may develop out of your presentation on the book. (due March 11 in class) (15%)

#3. Presentation on Oz's *Tale of Love and Darkness* (15-20 minutes with partner, individual grade, date to be assigned- February 4, 11, 18, 25, March 11, 18) (10%)

#4. 3rd essay: 1000-1500 words. Comparison/contrast analysis on the theme of "Longing." Choose two of the following writers, and select a work from each one. How does the author suggest the idea of "longing for the land"? Eshkol Nevo, Ghassan Kanafani, Meir Shalev, S. Yizhar, Shmuel Agnon, David Grossman, Mahmoud Darwish, Amos Oz (other than the course texts), A.B.Yehoshua, Etgar Keret, Yehuda Amichai, Hayyim Nahman Bialek, Ravikovitch, Tchernikhovsky, Abu Salma, Abd al-Rahim

Mahmud, or other Israeli/Palestinian author/s of your choice. Topic must be approved by me in advance. (due April 29th in class) (25%)

#5. Presentation (“teaching”) your 3rd essay topic (10-15 minutes, April 1st, 15th, 22nd—to be assigned) (10%)

#6. Final Examination (in class essay) Monday May 6th, 4:30-6:30 pm. (20%)

#6. Class attendance, participation and in-class writing (10%)

Reading List:

Required texts, available at LMU University Bookstore, are Amos Oz, *Tale of Love and Darkness*; Sari Nusseibeh, *Once Upon a Country: A Palestinian Life*; A.B. Yehoshua, *A Woman in Jerusalem*. There will also be a number of handouts distributed in class, and reserved readings and films on ERes (password: israelilit).

Weekly Schedule:

1/14: Introduction: Visual History of Palestine and Israel. Excerpts from Herzl, *Altneuland*. Discussion of Zionism.

January 21: No class. Martin Luther King holiday. Please view the film, *Exodus*.

1/28: 1st essay due. Discussion of *Exodus*. Amos Oz, *Tale of Love and Darkness* chapters 1-15.

2/4: Pre-state Israel. Oz TLD presentation. Shmuel Agnon, from *Only Yesterday*; Mahmoud Darwish, from “In the Presence of Absence” (handouts)

2/11: Immigration and Displacement. Oz, TLD presentation. Film, *Forget Baghdad*. Sari Nusseibeh, *Once Upon a Country: A Palestinian Life* chapters from Prologue-7.

February 18: No class (conference). Please view Film, *Wedding in Galilee* (on reserve) and bring to class an (informal) reflection noting

2/25: Oz, TLD presentation. Nusseibeh *Once Upon a Country*, chapters 8-16.

March 4: No class. Spring break.

3/11: 2nd essay due. Oz, TLD presentation. Ghassan Kanafani, “Returning to Haifa” and S. Yizhar, from *Khirbet Khizeh* (handout)

3/18: Other Israelis. Oz, TLD presentation. Films: *Yellow Asphalt* and *Voices from El Sayid*

3/25: No class. First night of Passover.

4/1: Teaching presentations. Poetry of the Middle East. Bialik, Ravikovitch, Tchernickhovsky, Abu Salma, Abd al-Rahim Mahmud, Zakaria Mohammad, Yehuda Amichai. Film: *The Five Houses of Lea Goldberg*

4/8: No class. Western Jewish Studies Association conference at LMU. SESSION ON SUNDAY APRIL 7th 6:30pm "Children Without a Shadow," REQUIRED ATTENDANCE INSTEAD OF CLASS.

4/15: Contact between cultures. Teaching presentations. Film: *The Band's Visit*

4/22: Teaching presentations. Film: *The Lemon Tree*.

4/29: Russian immigration. 3rd essay due. A. B. Yehoshua's *A Woman in Jerusalem*. Film, *The Human Resources Manager*

May 6th: Final examination.

Seek peace and pursue it. Psalm 34:14

This document may be modified at any time by the instructor. Please pay careful attention to all requirements and any changes.

Selected Bibliography

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.