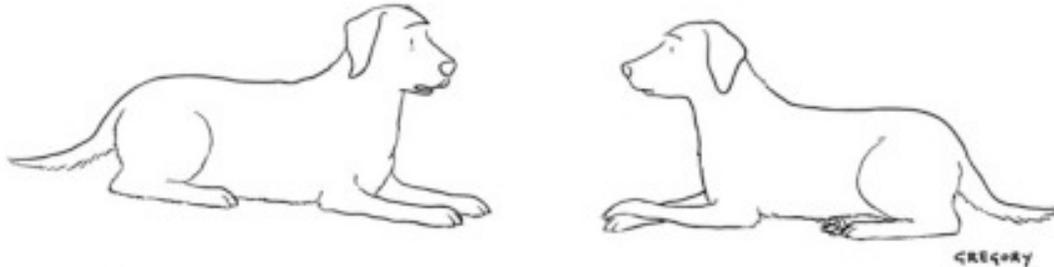


**HUM 514:01/614:01: Representations of Arabs and Jews in  
Israeli & Palestinian Literature & Film**



*"There they were, sitting around the dinner table, knocking off a bottle of C tes-du-Rh ne and blathering about the Middle East—you've never heard such shallow, simplistic reasoning in your life—and one of them turns to me and says, 'And what do you think, Barney? What do you think we should do?' and all I could come up with was 'Woof.' I felt like such an ass."*

**Professor:** Ranen Omer-Sherman

**Class Place & Time:** HM 215; Wednesday, 2:00-4:45

**Office:** 203 Humanities

**Office Hours:** Monday: 10:00-11:30 and by appointment

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**TITLES FOR PURCHASE** (All are in paperback):

Yehuda Amichai, *The Selected Poetry of Yehuda Amichai*

Suad Amiry, *Sharon and My Mother-in-Law: Ramallah Diaries*

Daniella Carmi, *Samir & Yonatan*

Ghassan Kanafani, *Palestine's Children: Returning to Haifa and Other Stories*

Sayed Kashua, *Let it Be Morning*

Savyon Liebrecht, *Apples From the Desert*

Eshkol Nevo, *Homesick*

Amos Oz, *Panther in the Basement*

Yahya Yakhliif, *A Lake Beyond the Wind*

A.B. Yehoshua, *The Lover*

S. Yizhar, *Khirbet Khizeh*

**Highly Recommended:**

Gregory Harms and Todd Ferry. *The Palestine-Israel Conflict: A Basic Introduction*

**The Following Selections are on Blackboard (print out for each class assigned)**

Oz Almog, "The Stamp of His Country's Landscape" (from *The Sabra*)

Peter Beinart, "The American Jewish Cocoon"

Ahlam Bisharat, “Nom de Guerre: Butterfly”  
 Almog Behar, “Ana Min al-Yahud - I am One of the Jews”  
 Joel Beinin and Lisa Hajjar, “Palestine, Israel and the Arab-Israeli Conflict: A Primer”  
 Joshua Cohen, “Martyrologies” (essay on Mahmoud Darwish)  
 Alan Dowty, *Israel/Palestine* (2<sup>nd</sup> edn.), chapters 6 and 7, pp. 137-203.  
 David Grossman, excerpt from *To the End of the Land*  
 Sayed Kashua, “Cinderella, or Herzl Disappears at Midnight”  
 Naim Kattan, “Jewish of Arab Origin and Culture”  
 Etgar Keret, “Cocked and Locked”  
 Gabriel Levin, “Attir” (on Israeli Bedouin) from *The Dune’s Twisted Edge*  
 Amos Oz, “Nomad and Viper”  
 Donna Rosenthal, “The Muslims” (chapter from *The Israelis*)  
 Ari Shavit, “Lydda, 1948”  
 Raja Shehadeh, excerpts from *Strangers in the House: Coming of Age in Occupied Palestine*  
 Benjamin Tammuz, “The Swimming Race”  
 Gadi Taub, “In Defense of Zionism”  
 A.B. Yehoshua, “Facing the Forests”  
 S. Yizhar, “The Prisoner”  
 Yael Zerubavel, “Patriotic Sacrifice and the Burden of Memory in Israeli Secular National Culture”

*The destruction of the collective memory of the Other, through the construction of one’s own, is a central element in the formation of all national identities.*

—Ilan Gur Ze’ev and Ian Pappé

*Ever since its formation, Israeli Jewish society has been connected with Arab [society] as if it were its Siamese twin....The Arab perceived as the ‘ultimate Other’ by Israeli Jewish society is the one who defines this society.*

—Nurith Gertz

*Neither people can develop without the other there, harassing, taunting, fighting; no Arab today has an identity that can be unconscious of the Jew, that can rule out the Jew as a psychic factor in the Arab identity; conversely, I think, no Jew can ignore the Arab in general, nor can he immerse himself in his ancient tradition and lose the Palestinian Arab and what Zionism has done to him. The more intense the modern struggles for identity, the more attention is paid by the Arab or the Jew to his chosen opponent, or partner. Each is the other.*

—Edward Said

*Zionism created an impossible hybrid of Jewish democracy as part of a mechanism of civic exclusion and segregation, but Israel has no choice but to include Arabism as part of it. It’s the responsibility of the majority to take care of the minority within it, in this case the minority that it created. It’s a known fact that a minority always knows more about the majority that the majority knows about the*

minority. *The Israeli Arab speaks Hebrew, knows about the Jewish holidays and the history of European Jewry.*

—Dor Guez, an Israeli artist, 3rd-generation Holocaust survivor on his father's side, Palestinian Christian on his mother's side

*Powerful social norms in Israel/Palestine assign Hebrew to Jews, Arabic to Arabs; notions of linguistic possession and transgression surround and pervade literary production in both languages. Writing across those borders is not only an aesthetic but also a distinctly political choice. What then, does it mean for the idea of Hebrew as the eternal language of the Jewish people when Palestinian Arab citizens choose to write in Hebrew and Israeli Jewish citizens choose to write in Arabic?*

—Lital Levy

*Empathy...is a form of virtual, not vicarious experience...in which emotional response comes with respect for the other and the realization that the experience of the other is not one's own. -*

—Dominick LaCapra

### **Course Description:**

This class draws on literary narratives and film documentaries (as well as a few exemplars of fictional Israeli cinema) to discuss the relationship between the Zionist dream of Homeland and the marginal figure of the Arab, both as perceived external threat and as the “Other” within Israeli society. We will also consider works written by Palestinians and Arab citizens of Israel. The core question we will address concerns the writer's empathic response to the plight of Palestinians and the Arab minority within Israel itself. This course focuses on the artist's response to Israeli politics and culture and issues such as human rights, Israel's historical relations with its Arab neighbors, as well as its current struggle to accommodate a nascent Palestinian nation. Other dynamics to be examined will include: the influence of the literary imagination on Israeli society; the role of dissent and protest in Israeli society; the Jewish state's ambivalence regarding Jews of Arab origin. We will see how the narrative forms of literature and cinema often challenge the rigid lines formed in ideological narratives to distinguish the “West” from the “East” and expose the contradictions in the dominant narrative. The instructor will also create opportunities for students to participate in a lively dialogue about current news headlines and important cultural and political trends in Israel, Palestine, and the Middle East, as they develop. Assignments will include midterm and final essay exams as well as brief and informal response papers.

**Please note:** During the duration of this course, I *strongly* encourage you to read newspapers such as Israel's *Ha'aretz*, Egypt's *Al Ahram*, and the *Jordan Times* [online in English] on a daily or at least a weekly basis to get a reasoned spectrum of current information and views. Read both news stories and editorials/op-eds to get a full range of political perspectives and events. *Ha'aretz*: <http://www.haaretz.com/> Jordan Times: <http://www.jordantimes.com/> Al Ahram: <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/index.htm/> Ma'an News Agency (Palestine): <http://www.maannews.net/eng/Default.aspx>

**Students with little background to the conflict** should definitely read the recommended text *The Palestine-Israel Conflict: A Basic Introduction* by Gregory Harms and Todd Ferry. And here is a useful site for anyone interested in quick and easy access to general information about Jewish religious beliefs and practices as well as culture, including contemporary literature:



or Arial,

- Title all essays, left-justify the text and use 1-inch margins.
- Number (paginate) the pages.
- Reference all quotations with parenthetical citations and remember to italicize book titles, short fiction in quotes, etc. Examples: (Grossman, 114) ;(*Panther*, 126); (“Short Story” 22).

**Essay Grades:** You should also be aware that I have high expectations for all members of this class. In my opinion, a “B” is a very respectable grade, and indicates work well done. I reserve “A”s for those who perform exceptionally well, in effort as well as achievement, in written as well as oral work. Following is a general outline of how I determine essay grades.

**A** The truly excellent essay: shows unusual polish and style; presents a fresh, highly original approach to its subject; integrates and interprets quotations seamlessly to support assertions; avoids clichés; presents controversial or unorthodox ideas successfully; has an absence of mechanical and grammatical flaws; displays an adept use of language; has a strong opening which entices the reader to continue and a conclusion which leaves the reader in command of the essay's implications; is well structured; and displays a comfortable, readable, mature writing style. After reading, the reader feels that they have learned something and is ready to read the essay again.

**B** An above average essay presents an interesting point of view and shows attention to the use of language or to structuring the essay and contains a minimum of technical errors. Little is included to distract or disturb the reading process. Reading is a pleasure.

**C** The average essay meets the assignment and has a clear purpose (thesis) that is supported by the body of the essay. Some technical and/or structural flaws may be present. The paper is often too vague or general and does not use examples or quotations from the text adequately. The reader is not instructed and is not tempted to read the paper again.

**D** The below average essay fails to make its point, or the purpose of the essay is unclear. The essay may also contain a combination of the following deficiencies: failure to respond to constructive advice offered by instructor; highly clichéd writing; has incoherent structure; contains logical contradictions; does not meet minimum page length or other specific assignment requirements; preaches rather than persuades; does not provide adequate evidence (including quotation of text) to support its assertions.

**F** Failure results from an egregious combination of the errors listed in D above. Failure to turn assignment in. Disregard of assignment instructions.

### **Course Schedule:**

*This syllabus is only a close approximation of how the course will be structured. I reserve the right to reschedule readings, films, and activities, but for the most part we will follow the order mapped out here. Reading assignments are provided the date before the session they will be discussed.*

## Calendar

**Jan 7** Introduction; in-class assignment: Please candidly describe your hopes and expectations, as well as apprehensions and fears, regarding this class; handout on comparative versions of Palestinian-Israeli conflict; **Read** Joel Beinin and Lisa Hajjar, "Palestine, Israel and the Arab-Israeli Conflict: A Primer," Gadi Taub, "In Defense of Zionism," and Ari Shavit, "Lydda, 1948" (all on Blackboard)

**Jan 14** **View** film documentary *Arab & Jew: Return to the Promised Land*; **Read:** Alan Dowty, "Israel/Palestine" (pp. 137-203 on Blackboard); "Palestinian & Israeli Comparative Narratives of History" (Blackboard); and Peter Beinart's "The American Jewish Cocoon"; also S. Yizhar's novella *Khirbet Khizeh*

**Jan 21** discuss Beinin & Hajjar, Shavit, Dowty, and Beinart essays; **View** and discuss film adaptation of S. Yizhar's novella *Khirbet Khizeh*; **Read:** Ehud Ben-Ezer's "Introduction" and S. Yizhar's "The Prisoner" (BLACKBOARD PDF) and **Read** excerpts from Raja Shehadeh's *Strangers in the House: Coming of Age in Occupied Palestine* (BLACKBOARD); Tammuz's short story "The Swimming Race" (BLACKBOARD)

**Jan 28** finish discussing *Khirbet Khizeh* and "The Prisoner"; also discuss Shehadeh's *Strangers in the House: Coming of Age in Occupied Palestine* and Tammuz's short story "The Swimming Race" **Read** Yehoshua, "Facing the Forests" and Amos Oz, "Nomad and Viper" (Blackboard)

**Feb 4** discuss Yehoshua's "Facing the Forests"; Amos Oz, "Nomad and Viper"; **View** *500 Dunam on the Moon*; **midterms assigned, due Feb. 25 beginning of class**

**Feb 11** **View** documentary, *Sayed Kashua: Forever Scared* and episode of *Arab Labor* sitcom; **EXTRA CREDIT FOR ATTENDING SAYED KASHUA LECTURE** from 3:00-5:00 this Thursday, from 3:00-5:00 in the Chao Auditorium. **Read** Yahya Yakhliif, *A Lake Beyond the Wind*; also Joshua Cohen essay on poet Mahmoud Darwish, "Martyrologies"

**Feb 18** Discuss Kashua's presentation and *Let it Be Morning*; discuss Yakhlif, *A Lake Beyond the Wind* and Cohen's "'Martyrologies"; **Read** Gabriel Levin's essay, "Attir"; and David Grossman, excerpt from the novel *To the End of the Land* (Blackboard)

**Feb 25 Midterms due beginning of class**; Discuss Gabriel Levin's essay, "Attir"; and David Grossman, excerpt from the novel *To the End of the Land* (BLACKBOARD); **View** Elia Suleiman's *The Time that Remains* **Read** A.B. Yehoshua, *The Lover*

**Mar 4** Discuss A.B. Yehoshua, *The Lover*

**Mar 11** View and discuss film documentary *Promises*: **Read** "Returning to Haifa" in Ghassan Kanafani's *Palestine's Children: Returning to Haifa and Other Stories*; ALSO Suad Amiry, *Sharon and My Mother-in-Law: Ramallah Diaries*; and Ahlam Bisharat short story, "Nom de Guerre: Butterfly"; **Second Midterms Assigned, due beginning of last class session**

**March 16-22 Spring Break** (catch up on your reading!)

**Mar 25** Discuss "Returning to Haifa" in Ghassan Kanafani's *Palestine's Children: Returning to Haifa and Other Stories*; also Suad Amiry, *Sharon and My Mother-in-Law: Ramallah Diaries*; also Bisharat, "Nom de Guerre: Butterfly"; if time allows **View** and discuss *My Neighborhood* (a short film about the struggle for Sheikh Jarrah); **Read** Donna Rosenthal's essay "The Muslims"; also Savyon Liebrecht's short stories "A Room on the Roof" and "The Road to Cedar City" (in *Apples From the Desert*);

**April 1** Discuss Rosenthal's essay "The Muslims"; also Savyon Liebrecht's short stories "A Room on the Roof" and "The Road to Cedar City" **Read** Eshkol Nevo, *Homesick*

**April 8** Discuss Nevo, *Homesick*; **read** Daniella Carmi, *Samir & Yonatan*; also Almog Behar, "Ana min al yahoud: I am one of the Jews" and "Sheikh Jarrah 2010" (Blackboard)

**April 15 no class meeting** (I am away at a research conference; catch up on your reading and/or writing; Extra credit if you work with the Writing Center!)

**April 22 last class: Second midterms due**; discuss Carmi, *Samir & Yonatan*; also Behar, "Ana min al yahoud: I am one of the Jews" and "Sheikh Jarrah 2010" (Blackboard); self-evaluations