

University of Toronto, Spring 2010
NMC 277H1(S)
Society & Cultural Politics in Israel
Dr. Dina Roginsky

Tuesday 5:00-7:00 pm, BF 323
Office hours: Tuesday 7:00-8:00 pm, BF 332
Email: dina.roginsky@utoronto.ca

Description

This course focuses on major social and cultural aspects of modern Israel in the past sixty years since the establishment of the state. In this course you will get the feeling of contemporary Israeli society, encompassing its diversity and complexity. The main social divisions within Israeli society will be discussed: *Ashkenazi* and *Mizrahi* Jews, Jews and Arabs, religion and secularism, newcomers and veteran immigrants, right and left politics as well as major discrepancies regarding issues of orthodoxy, military service, holocaust commemoration, civil rights in a Jewish state, gender issues and languages in Israel. Changing Israeli cultural politics will be analyzed dynamically, introducing national melting-pot institutionalization processes “from above” on the one hand (for example: Hebrew revival, folk dance creation, sing along, and food consumption policies); grassroots’ processes of privatization and multiculturalism on the other hand (for example: homosexual activism, private bereavement commemoration); and finally the impacts of Americanization and globalization that challenge Israeli Zionist ideology.

Required reading: (marked with * sign)

The required articles and book chapters appear either in the course reader (marked as READER) or electronically (marked as ONLINE).

Required reading is numbered. You can purchase the course pack reader at CSPI office, 180 Bloor Street West, Suite # 801. Tel: 416 929 2774

Israeli current events from the daily *Ha’aretz* newspaper will be discussed in class. See www.haaretz.com for the English edition.

Required viewing: Three documentary films will be screened during class time.

Recommended reading: (marked with # sign)

Recommended books are available at the Robarts library.

Requirements: Active participation in class, weekly submission of reading summaries, two film reviews, term test, and current event essay. Also, students are solely responsible for being aware of announcements made in class. All assignments should be handed in as a hard copy. Late submission of the film reviews and the current event essay will result in a 5% penalty per day except with an official medical form that clearly attests the specific dates of illness:

see <http://www.utoronto.ca/health/forms/medcert.pdf>.

Attendance, participation and preparation - 15%

An ongoing partaking and preparation for the class is required, and students are expected to be prepared to participate in class discussion. Starting from the second week, at the beginning of each class students should hand in a summary of at least one required reading for that week. You cannot hand-in a summary for a reading from previous week. Late submissions will not be accepted. The summary will be one page long for each article and will include main ideas, concepts, research methods, questions and arguments that are discussed in the articles (see template for the weekly summaries at the end of this syllabus and also on Blackboard). Example of summary reading # 1 will be provided. Overall you will need to hand-in at least 10 summaries. (See further instructions under “Submission of your assignments”).

Film analysis – 20%

You will analyze two documentaries that will be screened during class time.

All students will write on the first film shown. For the second film analysis you can choose one out of two documentaries that will be screened in class. The second analysis have different due dates depending on the film shown.

Due date for the first movie analysis is Jan. 26

Due date for the first optional movie analysis is Feb. 23

Due date for the second optional movie analysis is Mar. 23

Use the following leading questions: What is the social / cultural debate(s) introduced in the film? Who are the people/groups in debate? Describe in a neutral way the different perspectives that are presented in the film. Incorporate at least two required readings in your analysis. The film analysis should be no less than 3 pages and no more than 4 pages, double-spaced (900 to 1200 words). Remember that you are writing this analysis as students in the course “Israeli society and culture” and not as art critics.

Term Test - Take Home – 35% - March 9

There will be one term test that will take place during class time: 5-7 pm. No need to come to class on this date. Questions will be posted on Blackboard at 5 pm, students will write the answers at home, using personal computers. From 7 to 7:15 pm students will send their test to the instructor’s email address: dina.roginsky@utoronto.ca and will need to get a confirmation reply from the instructor. Delayed submission will not be accepted. The material for the test will include articles, lectures and films that are assigned up until the test date.

Current Event Essay – 30%, due date: April 6

Choose an Israeli current event that you have read about in *ha’aretz* (www.haaretz.com) since January 2010, and analyze it by using ideas from the course material. Employ the discrepancies embedded in Israeli society (for example: Jews-Arabs, veterans-newcomers, Ashkenazi-Mizrahi, religious-secular, right-left) focused around a specific topic (for example: gender issues, LGBT community, military service, kibbutz, holocaust, Hebrew language, Zionism, post-Zionism etc.) Use at least four required readings from the syllabus and one new academic article that is relevant specifically to the subject matter to support your argument. The essay should be about 7-8 pages, double spaced (around 2100 to 2400 words). The analyzed article from *ha’aretz* should be attached to it. You have to send the link for your article ahead of time to the instructor’s email in order to get approval for your chosen article.

Submission of your assignments

Assignments should be handed-in in the beginning of the class as a hard copy printed document. If for some reason you miss a class make sure to provide a hard copy of your assignment for that week ahead of time, have it stamped by the NMC office and put it in my mail box located at the second floor, at the Department of Near & Middle Eastern Civilizations, 4 Bancroft Avenue.

Special needs

Students who need academic accommodations due to different disabilities should speak with the instructor in person at the beginning of the course and provide an appropriate documentation. See further details at the U of T accessibility services website: <http://studentlife.utoronto.ca/accessibility/staff/accomstrat.htm>

Total grading

Attendance, participation and preparation	15%
Film analysis (two films)	20%
Term test	35%
Current event essay	30%

	100%

Week 1, January 5: Introduction

Topics: Working definitions for ‘society’ and ‘culture’ in a broader political perspective. What is modern Israel? Is Israel a homogeneous society?

1 * Rebhun, Uzi. 2004. Major trends in the development of Israeli Jews: A synthesis of the last century. Pp.3-19 in Uzi Rebhun and Chaim Waxman (eds.) *Jews in Israel: Contemporary social and cultural patterns*. Hanover: Brandeis University Press. READER

Week 2, January 12: In the Beginning – Israel’s Emergence

Assignments: Hand in reading summary

Topics: The State of Israel emerges during the 1948 War of Independence, the mass immigration (*aliyah*) in the 1950’s; new and old immigrants (*olim*), the kibbutz, the transit camp (*maabara*), state and society after war, austerity in Israel (*tzena*).

2 * Gat, Moshe. 2002. The IDF and the mass immigration of the early 1950s: Aid to the immigrant camps. *Israel Affairs* 8, (1): 191-210. READER

3 * Rozin, Orit. 2006. Food, identity, nationalism and nation building in Israeli formation years. *Israel Studies Forum* 21, (1): 52-80. READER

Week 3, January 19: National Culture and National Language

Assignments: Hand in reading summary

Topics: the film “From Language to Language” shows the conflicts between the idea of Hebrew as a Jewish sacred language, and the reality of Hebrew as the language of everybody in Israel, used in everyday life. Questions of authenticity, appropriation, and cultural politics are discussed.

* **Film:** From Language to Language (Nurith Aviv, documentary, Israel 2005, 56 min).

4 * Ben-Rafael, Eliezer. 1994.

pp. 49-65: "Language revival, integration and elitism"

pp. 209-217 "The diffusion of Arabic"

In his *Language, Identity and the Social Division: The Case of Israel*. Oxford: Clarendon Press. READER

5 * Zerubavel, Yael. 2005. Transhistorical encounters in the land of Israel: On symbolic bridges, national memory, and the literary imagination. *Jewish Social Studies* 11, (3): 115-140. ONLINE

<http://simplelink.library.utoronto.ca/url.cfm/66548>

Zerubavel, Yael. 1995. *Recovered roots: Collective Memory and the making of Israeli national tradition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Handelman, Don. 2004. *Nationalism and the Israeli state: Bureaucratic logic in public events*. New York: Berg.

Almog, Oz. 2000. *The Sabra: The creation of the new Jew*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Week 4, January 26: Israeli Cultural Politics: Models of Center and Periphery

Assignments: hand in first film analysis – mandatory, and a reading summary

Topics: Major splits in Israel - *Ashkenazi* Jews vs. *Mizrahi* Jews; Jews vs. Arabs. Different sub-groups of "others" negotiate their positions and challenge the mainstream Israeli culture. Two case studies are discussed: Israeli popular music and Israeli folk dancing.

6 * Regev, Motti. 2000. To have a culture of our own: On Israeliness and its variants. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*. 23, (2): 223-247. ONLINE

<http://simplelink.library.utoronto.ca/url.cfm/66549>

7 * Roginsky, Dina. 2007. Folklore, folklorism, and synchronization: preserved-created folklore in Israel. *Journal of Folklore Research* 44 (1): 41-66. ONLINE

<http://simplelink.library.utoronto.ca/url.cfm/97423>

Shenhav, Yehouda. 2006. *The Arab Jews: A postcolonial reading of nationalism, religion and ethnicity*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Week 5, February 2: A State in War, a State of War I

Assignments: Hand in reading summary

Topics: State in a constant war, and a constant "state of war" within Israeli society. The Israeli reserve system as a "nation in uniform" and family-military relationship.

8 * Helman, Sara. 2002. Militarism and the construction of the life-world of Israeli males: The case of the reserves system. Pp. 191-221 in Lomsky-Feder, Edna and Ben-Ari Eyal (eds.) *The military and militarism in Israeli society*. Albany: SUNY. READER

9 * Herzog, Hanna. 2004. "Family-military relations in Israel as a genderizing social mechanism" *Armed Forces and Society*, 31(1): 5-30. ONLINE
<http://simplelink.library.utoronto.ca/url.cfm/66551>

Ben-Eliezer, Uri. 1998. *The making of Israeli militarism*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

Week 6, February 9: A State in War, a State of War II

Assignments: Hand in reading summary

Topics: different groups in Israeli society challenge the armed forces and bring about a gradual change in the way the IDF is perceived in Israel – *Haredim*, holocaust survivors and left wing *Refuseniks*.

* **Film:** Have you ever shot someone? (Michal Aviad, documentary, Israel 1995, 57 min)

10 * Stadler, Nurit and Ben-Ari, Eyal. 2003. Other-worldly soldiers? Ultra-orthodox views of military service in contemporary Israel. *Israel Affairs* 9, (4):17-48. ONLINE
<http://simplelink.library.utoronto.ca/url.cfm/66552>

11 * Brog, Mooli. 2003. Victims and victors: Holocaust and military commemoration in Israel's collective memory. *Israel Studies* 8, (3): 65-99. ONLINE
<http://simplelink.library.utoronto.ca/url.cfm/66553>

Dloomy, Ariel. 2005. The Israeli Refuseniks: 1983-2003. *Israel Affairs* 11, (4): 695-716. ONLINE

Week 7, February 16: No classes, reading week

Week 8, February 23: Jewish State and Civil Rights I

Assignments: hand in film analysis – optional # 1, hand in reading summary

Topics: a democratic and Jewish state – can they live together? The split between Jews and Arabs in Israel.

12 * Dowty, Alan. 1999. Is Israel democratic? Substance and semantics in the ethnic democracy debate. *Israel Studies* 4, (2): 1-15. ONLINE
<http://simplelink.library.utoronto.ca/url.cfm/66554>

13 * Smootha, Sammy. 2004. Arab-Jewish relations in Israel: A deeply divided society. Pp. 31-68 in: Shapira Anita (ed.) *Israeli identity in transition*. London: Praeger. READER

Rouhana, Nadim. 1997. *Palestinian citizens in an ethnic Jewish state: Identities in conflict*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Week 9, March 2: Gender and Family in Israel

Assignments: Hand in reading summary

Topics: Gender and family relations in Israel, women's status in contemporary Israel, and the ideology of equality in the Kibbutz.

<p>16 * Herzog, Hanna. 2004. Women in Israeli society. Pp. 195-220 in Uzi Rebhun and Chaim Waxman (eds.) <i>Jews in Israel: Contemporary social and cultural patterns</i>. Hanover: Brandeis University Press. READER</p>
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<p>17 * Swirsky Barbara, Safir Marilyn, Palgi Michal. 1991. The Kibbutz and family life. Pp. 251-269 in: <i>Calling the equality bluff: Women in Israel</i>. New York: Pergamon Press. READER</p>
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Naveh, Hannah (ed). 2003. *Gender and Israeli Society: Women's Time*. London: Vallentine Mitchell.

Week 10, March 9: TERM TEST**Week 11, March 16: Jewish State and Civil Rights II**

Assignments: Hand in reading summary

Topics: a democratic and Jewish state – can they live together? The split between religion and secularism in Israel, the case of homosexuality.

<p>* Film: Pride (Igal Hecht and Lior Cohen, documentary, Israel 2006, 45 min)</p>

<p>14 * Liebman, Charles. 1997. Reconceptualizing the culture conflict among Israeli Jews. <i>Israel Studies</i> 2, (2): 172-189.</p>
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<p>ONLINE: http://simplelink.library.utoronto.ca/url.cfm/66555</p>
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<p>15 * Kama, Amit. 2000. From terra incognita to terra firma: The logbook of the voyage of gay men's community into the Israeli public sphere. <i>Journal of Homosexuality</i> 38, (4): 133-162. ONLINE</p>

<p>http://simplelink.library.utoronto.ca/url.cfm/66556</p>
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Urian, Dan and Karsh, Efraim (eds). 1999. *In Search for Identity: Jewish Aspects in Israeli Culture*. London and Portland: Frank Cass.

Week 12, March 23: Immigrants or Olim in Contemporary Israel

Assignments: Hand in reading summary, hand in film analysis, optional # 2

Topics: Russian and Ethiopian immigrants in Israel. Latest immigrant groups to Israel change Israeli demography and challenge the concept of *aliyah*. Inner processes challenge the Zionist ideology.

<p>18 * Hacoheh, Dvora. 2002. Mass immigration and the demographic revolution in Israel. <i>Israel Affairs</i> 8, (1): 177-190. ONLINE</p>

<p>http://simplelink.library.utoronto.ca/url.cfm/66558</p>
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19 * Ram, Uri. 2004. The state of nation: Contemporary challenges to Zionism in Israel. Pp. 305-320 in: Kemp, A. Newman, D. Ram, U. and Yiftachel, O. (eds.) *Israelis in Conflict: Hegemonies, Identities, and Challenges*. Sussex Academic Press. READER

Week 13 (March 30 – day is going to change due to Passover):

Multiculturalism and Post-Zionism in Contemporary Israel

Assignments: Hand in Current Event Essay, Hand in reading summary

Topics: Israel is changed and challenged: Israel becomes a multicultural and globalized state; Israelis abroad.

20 * Ben-Rafael, Eliezer and Peres Yochanan. 2005. The configuration of multiculturalism. Ch. 10, Pp. 203-221 in their: *Is Israel one? Religion, nationalism and multiculturalism confounded*. Leiden, Boston: Brill. READER

21 * Almog, Oz. 2004. The Globalization of Israel. Pp. 233-256 in: Shapira Anita (ed.) *Israeli Identity in Transition*. London: Praeger. READER

General suggested reading:

Ben-Rafael, Eliezer and Peres Yochanan. 2005. *Is Israel one? Religion, nationalism and multiculturalism confounded*. Leiden, Boston: Brill

Goldscheider, Calvin. 2002. *Israel's changing society: Population, ethnicity and development*. Colorado: West View.

Kimmerling, Baruch. 2001. *The invention and decline of Israeliness: State, society, and the military*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Penslar, Derek. 2007. *Israel in history: The Jewish state in contemporary perspective*. London and NY: Routledge.

Rebhun, Uzi and Chaim Waxman (eds.) *Jews in Israel: Contemporary social and cultural patterns*. Hanover: Brandeis University Press.

Other sources:

Academic Journals:

Israel Studies

Israel Studies Forum

Israel Affairs

Israel Social Studies Research

Journal of Israeli history

Israeli Newspaper:

www.haaretz.com (online English edition)

www.haaretz.co.il (online Hebrew edition)

Society & Cultural Politics in Israel (2010) – hand in summary # _____

Student name: _____ Date: _____

Title of article: _____

Main Concept(s), name(s), date(s):

Main argument(s):

Research methods (if applicable):