Since its origination in Palestine almost seventy years ago, Israeli cinema has been forced to deal with the hardships of representing the culture and history of a country under a never-ending siege, a nation liking to see itself as facing an ongoing war for survival. This course surveys the development of Israeli cinema in its social, historical and aesthetic contexts, exploring a remarkable evolution from almost primitive infancy to sophisticated maturity of a national cinema still struggling to even exist. Focusing on cinematic representations of state-building, war and trauma, military service, the Holocaust, the Israeli/Palestinian conflict, and the multifaceted Israeli Jewish identity, this course will attempt to provide insight into both the history of Israel since its establishment in 1948 and the bourgeoning culture of its indigenous filmmaking.

Breakdown of Grades:

Mid-Term Exam.................................30%
Final Paper.....................................40%
Participation in Class.......................15%
Attendance.....................................15%

Course Policy:

1. Attendance is vital. Three absences will result in the loss of one full grade when final grades are tabulated. Six absences will result in a failure for the course.

2. Papers are to be typed (double-spaced) and submitted on time. I reserve the right to lower the grade of any late paper unless the student has made arrangements in advance of the due date.

3. Plagiarized material found in any paper is inexcusable and will result in a failing grade for the paper; in extremis it leads to expulsion from school. It is the student’s responsibility to ensure proper documentation of any information.
Readings:

The following books are the required and optional readings, available for purchase at the NYU Bookstore on 18 Washington Place (Tel: 212-998-4667). The rest of the readings for the class are available online on the course’s Blackboard website.

**Required Books:**


**Optional Books:**


All of the readings should be read prior to the lecture & screenings of each class. It is essential that you follow all of the reading assignments, as the discussions in class will depend on your familiarity with the texts. The readings are also valuable sources of information for the mid-term exam and final paper.

**Schedule of Classes:**

**Session 1 (January 22nd):**

**Introduction/Why Studying Israeli Cinema?**

Screening:
Feature: *A Wall in Jerusalem* (Albert Knobler and Frederic Rosif, 1970)

Readings:

**Session 2 (January 29th):**

**The Foundation of Israel: Early Zionist Films and the Establishment of the Zionist Master-Narrative:**

Screenings:
Feature: *Hill 24 Doesn’t Answer* (Thorold Dickinson, 1955)
Readings:


Shohat, Ella. *Israeli Cinema*. 58-76.

Recommended:

**Session 3 (February 5th):**
*The Evolution of the Israeli War Film (Part I): Patriotism and National Euphoria After the Six-Day War*

Screening:
Feature: *Azit, The Paratrooper Dog* (Boaz Davidson, 1972)
Clips: *Mivtza Yonatan (Operation Thunderbolt)* (Menachem Golan, 1977)

Readings:

Recommended:

**Session 4 (February 12th):**
*The Comic Satires of Ephraim Kishon and the Ridicule of Socialist Zionism*

Screenings:
Feature: *Sallah Shabati* (Ephraim Kishon, 1964)

Readings:

Kishon, Efraim (with Kariel Gardosh). *So Sorry We Won!* Tel Aviv: Ma’ariv Library, 1967; *Woe to the Victors* Bloch, 1969 (excerpts)

**Session 5 (February 26th):**
*The “Bourekas” Social Comedies: Representing Ethnic Tensions Between Ashkenazi and Sephardi Jews*

Screenings:
Feature: *Kazablan* (Menachem Golan, 1974)
Clips: *Charlie and a Half* (Boaz Davidson, 1974), *Shlager* (Assi Dayan, 1979),
Snooker (Boaz Davidson, 1975)

Readings:


Recommended:

Session 6 (March 5th):
[mid-term exam]
The ‘New Sensibility’ Films Between Two Wars: The Collapse of the Israeli Ethos and the Zionist Dream

Feature: Hole in the Moon (Uri Zohar, 1965)
Clips: Breathless (Jean-Luc Godard, 1959), Peeping Tom (Uri Zohar, 1972), But Where is Daniel Wax? (Avraham Heffner, 1972), The House on Chelouche Street (Moshe Mizrachi, 1973)

Readings:

Shohat, Ella. Israeli Cinema. 179-197.

Recommended:

Session 7 (March 19th):
The Image of the Arab in Israeli Cinema: The New ‘Palestinian Wave’
[finish reading Amos Oz’s “A Tale of Love and Darkness”]

Feature: Hamsin (Eastern Wind) (Daniel Wachsmann, 1982)
Clips: Behind the Walls (Uri Barabash, 1984), Cup Final (Eran Riklis, 1991)

Readings:


Recommended:

Session 8 (March 26th):
The Haunting Shadow of the Holocaust: Survivors Speaking Their Past

Screenings:
Feature: Because of That War (Orna Ben-Dor Niv, 1988)
Clips: Shoah (Claude Lanzmann, 1985), Summer of Aviya (Eli Cohen, 1988, Israel, 95m), Under the Domim Tree (Eli Cohen, 1994), Schindler’s List (Steven Spielberg, 1993), The Specialist (Eyal Sivan, 1999)

Readings:


Recommended:

Session 9 (April 2nd):
The Evolution of the Israeli War Film (Part II): Self-Criticism and Left-Wing Pacifism

Screenings:
Feature: Time for Cherries (Haim Buzaglo, 1991)
Clips: Late Summer Blues (Renen Schorr, 1987), One of Us (Uri Barbash, 1989), Cup Final (Eran Riklis, 1991)

Readings:


Recommended:
Session 10 (April 9th):
**Masculinity in Crisis: From the Israeli Macho to the Vulnerable Anti-Hero**

Clips: *Don’t Give a Damn* (Shmuel Imberman, 1987), *Yossi and Jagger* (Eytan Fox, 2002).

Readings:


Session 11 (April 16th):
**Amos Gitai: Israel’s Notorious Cinematic Ambassador**

Screenings:
Feature: *Kippur* (Amos Gitai, 2000)

Readings:


Session 12 (April 23rd):
**Contemporary Israeli Documentaries**

Screenings:
Feature: *Arna’s Children* (Juliano Mer Khamis, 2003)

Readings:
TBA

Session 13 (April 30th):
[final paper is due]
**The ‘New Wave’ of Israeli Cinema: The Commercial and Aesthetic Impact of the Israeli Film Fund**

Screenings:
Feature: *Or (Mon trésor)* (Keren Yedaya, 2004)

Readings:


**Supplemental Readings (Available in English):**


Harris, E. “Film Production Problems and Activities in Palestine.” *Penguin Film Review* January 1948: 36-41.


Stein, Rebecca, and Ted Swedenburg. Palestine, Israel, and the Politics of Popular


