

**“Israeli Culture and Society: 1880 Present”**  
**JS273W / HIST296W**

Undergraduate Lecture Course with Writing Requirement

Spring Semester 2019, Taught by Professor Eli Sperling

Course days, time and location: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 10:00 – 11:15am, Emerson #103

Office hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 8:30-9:50am, Bowden 121

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**Course Overview:**

Upon its inception, Zionism needed more than political and financial solutions to actualize a Jewish home in Palestine. It was necessary for the architects of the Zionist enterprise to cultivate a “new Jew” to lay the societal foundation for what would become the state of Israel. The result was a largely European, secular and labor-focused conception of Hebrew and then Israeli society and culture. However, in the decades following Israel’s independence in 1948, staggered waves of culturally, religiously, and geographically diverse Jewish immigrants came to Israel. These immigrant groups from the Middle East, North Africa, Ethiopia, the former Soviet Union, Western Europe and other locations, as well as Israel’s Arab population have all challenged the still evolving notion of “Israeliness.” Through the lens of scholarly works, music, literature, and other media, this course will explore the many layers of Israeli culture and society.

**Required books assigned for the course can be purchased online from a favorite book seller or at the Emory bookstore:**

Regev, Motti, and Seroussi, Edwin. *Popular Music and National Culture in Israel*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004.

Shapira, Anita. *Israel: A History*. Boston: Brandeis UP, 2012.

**Grading:** Midterm exam will be given in room Emerson 103 on March 7, 2019 (30% of final grade). For exam, please bring one large Blue Book. The grade on the final research paper (20-25 pages double spaced) for this course will constitute 60% of the final grade. 10% of the final grade will be based on class participation and bi-weekly writing assignments, each of which will be 1-2 pages double spaced.

**\*Spring break is the week of March 11-15, no class.**

**\*Students will be required to meet with the instructor two times during the semester to discuss their individual research projects and corresponding final papers. We will discuss scheduling these meetings and the expectations/rubric for grading these papers in class during the fourth week of the semester.**

**Note on Disabilities Act:**

Emory University is committed under the Americans with Disabilities Act and its Amendments and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act to providing appropriate accommodations to individuals with documented disabilities. If you have a disability-related need for reasonable academic adjustments in this course, provide the instructor(s) with an accommodation notification letter from Access, Disabilities Services and Resources office. Students are expected to give two weeks-notice of the need for accommodations. If you need immediate accommodations or physical access, please arrange to meet with instructor(s) as soon as your accommodations have been finalized.

**Note on Emory honor code:**

The honor code is in effect throughout the semester. By taking this course, you affirm that it is a violation of the code to cheat on exams, to plagiarize, to deviate from the teacher's instructions about collaboration on work that is submitted for grades, to give false information to a faculty member, and to undertake any other form of academic misconduct. You agree that the teacher is entitled to move you to another seat during examinations, without explanation. You also affirm that if you witness others violating the code you have a duty to report them to the honor council. <http://catalog.college.emory.edu/academic/policies-regulations/honor-code.html>

**\*The readings listed below are compulsory and can be accessed on the blackboard page designated for this course (required books must be purchased and will not be available digitally like the other readings).**

**Pre-Reading (please read before our first session):**

Batnitzky, Leora. *How Judaism Became a Religion: An Introduction to Modern Jewish Thought*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2013. Pp. 1-49.

Regev, Motti, and Seroussi, Edwin. *Popular Music and National Culture in Israel*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004. Pp. 1-25.

**Course topics and assigned readings (readings listed under each topic should be read before that session):****Week 1:**

January 15, 2019:

*Origins of Zionism, Jewish nationalism, and the state of pre-Zionist Jewish culture*

- Introduction to course, discussion on origins of Jewish nationalism and diaspora Jewish life in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries

January 17, 2019:

- Jewish Culture before Zionism, antisemitism, and transitioning towards a “new Jew”
  - Hertzberg, Arthur. *The Zionist Idea*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1997. Pp. 101-132
  - Mendes-Flohr, Paul R., and Jehuda Reinharz. *The Jew in the Modern World: A Documentary History*. New York: Oxford UP, 1995. Pp. 326-335.

**Week 2:**

January 22, 2019:

- Methodologies: critical reading of primary and secondary sources, using culture as a window into layers of history – what is cultural history and how will it be approached in this course?
  - Burke, Peter. *Popular culture in Early Modern Europe*. New York: Harper Row, 1978. Pp. 3-23.
  - Darnton, Robert. *The Great Cat Massacre: And Other Episodes in French Cultural History*. New York: Basic, 2009. Pp. 3-7.

January 24, 2019:

- Early Zionism and the origins of Hebrew culture: tensions, diversity and the emergence of Zionist organizations & institutions
  - Katz, Jacob. “The Forerunners of Zionism.” *Essential Papers on Zionism*, by Jehuda Reinharz, Cassell, 1996, pp. 33–45.
  - Rabinovitch, Simon. *Jews and Diaspora Nationalism Writings on Jewish Peoplehood in Europe and the United States*. Waltham: Brandeis UP, 2012, pp. 23–44.
  - Shapira, Anita. *Israel: A History*. Boston: Brandeis UP, 2012. Pp. 1-26.

**Week 3:**

January 29, 2019:

*The Yishuv culture of pre-state Palestine: the convergence of European cultural ideals, Jewish thought, and eastern aesthetics – who was the “new Jew?”*

- East and West Merge: waves of immigration from Europe, eastern aesthetics and how we address the invention of culture
  - Even-Zohar, Itamar. "The Emergence of a Native Hebrew Culture in Palestine, 1882-1948." *Poetics Today* 11.1 (1990): 175-91.

- Saposnik, Arieh Bruce. "Europe And Its Orients in Zionist Culture Before The First World War." *The Historical Journal* 49.04 (2006): 1105.

January 31, 2019:

- Hebrew Culture and the Hebrew Language
  - Helman, Anat. "Even the Dogs in the Street Bark in Hebrew: National Ideology and Everyday Culture in Tel-Aviv." *Jewish Quarterly Review* 92.3-4 (2002): 359-82.
  - Shahar, Natan. "The Eretz Israeli Song and the Jewish National Fund," Beit Berl College.

#### Week 4:

February 5, 2019:

- Nativness and the Hebrew folk song: *shirei erez yisrael*
  - Eliram, Talilah. "The Israeli Folksong (Song of the Land-of-Israel)," Translated from Hebrew by Eliahu Adelman, Hebrew University Jewish Music Research Center. [www.jewish-music.huji.ac.il/sites/default/files/The\\_Israeli\\_Folksong-JMRC.pdf](http://www.jewish-music.huji.ac.il/sites/default/files/The_Israeli_Folksong-JMRC.pdf)
  - Loeffler, James. "Do Zionists Read Music from Right to Left? Abraham Tsvi Idelsohn and the Invention of Israeli Music." *Jewish Quarterly Review* 100.3 (2010): 385-416.
  - Regev, Motti. "To Have a Culture of Our Own: on Israeliness and Its Variants." *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 23, no. 2, 2000, pp. 223–247.

February 7, 2019:

- Wrapping up the pre-state period – how can we define the “new Jew” in 1948? What are the cultural tensions on the dawn of Israel’s independence?
  - **Intro to writing a research paper on the cultural history of Israel for this course: topics, approaches, requirements, meeting with me and what makes a “good paper” good (we will dedicate 30 minutes of this session to discussing research papers and the process)**

#### Week 5:

February 12, 2019:

- The foundation of the state of Israel, the *Sabra*, and early Israeli identity

- Shamir, Moshe. *With his Own Hands: Elik's Story*. Tel Aviv: Israel Universities Press, 1970.
- Zerubavel, Yael. "The 'Mythological Sabra' and Jewish Past: Trauma, Memory, and Contested Identities." *Israel Studies*, vol. 7, no. 2, 2002, pp. 115–144.

February 14, 2019:

*Mamlachtiut (statism), early Israeli institutions, and their impacts on Israeli culture*

- Mamlachtiut, Civil Religion, and Cultural output
  - Liebman, Charles S., and Eliezer Don-Yehiya. *Civil Religion in Israel: Traditional Judaism and Political Culture in the Jewish State*. Berkeley: U of California, 1983. Pp. 4-11, 84-122.
  - Rubinstein, Amnon. "No More Sabras," in his: *From Herzl to Rabin: the Changing Image of Zionism* (New York & London: Holmes & Meier, 2000), pp. 159-182.

### **Week 6:**

February 19, 2019:

- Statist/establishment views on the Holocaust and Israeli identity in 1950s and 60s
  - Amos Oz, *Where the Jackals Howl and Other Stories*, "The Trappist Monastery," London: Fontana, 1983. Pp. 84-106.
  - Ben-Amos, Avner, and Ilana Bet-El. "Holocaust Day and Memorial Day in Israeli Schools: Ceremonies, Education and History." *Israel Studies* 4.1 (1999): 258-84.

February 21, 2019:

*Jewish immigration from the Middle East and North Africa: Mizrahi Israelis bring Arabic style music, Middle Eastern foods, and a more traditional, religious approach to Jewish observance and practice*

- 1 million Jews from Muslim lands nearly Double Israel's population
  - Shapira, Anita. *Israel: A History*. Boston: Brandeis UP, 2012. Pp. 222 – 270

### **Week 7:**

February 26, 2019:

- Mizrahi Cultural output: broadening Israeliness and the definition of the new Jew

- Amir, Eli. *Scapegoat*. Tel Aviv: Am Oved Publishers, 1987. Pp. 9-52.
- Regev, Motti, and Seroussi, Edwin. *Popular Music and National Culture in Israel*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004. Pp. 222-270.

February 28, 2019:

*1967, 1973 and 1982: How did these wars impact Israeli society and cultural output?*

- June 1967 War
  - Regev, Motti, and Seroussi, Edwin. *Popular Music and National Culture in Israel*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004. Pp. 113-136
  - Shapira, Anita. *Israel: A History*. Boston: Brandeis UP, 2012. Pp. 295-325

### **Week 8:**

March 5, 2019:

- June 67 War Continued – watch “Avanti Popolo” in class
- October 1973 War
  - Regev, Motti, and Seroussi, Edwin. *Popular Music and National Culture in Israel*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004. Pp. 137-158
  - Shapira, Anita. *Israel: A History*. Boston: Brandeis UP, 2012. Pp. 326-339

**March 7, 2019 -- Mid Term**

**Spring Break: March 11-15**

### **Week 9:**

March 19, 2019:

- 1982 Lebanon War
  - Regev, Motti, and Seroussi, Edwin. *Popular Music and National Culture in Israel*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004. Pp. 161-168
  - Shapira, Anita. *Israel: A History*. Boston: Brandeis UP, 2012. Pp. 357-389
- 1982 Lebanon War Continued -- Watch “Waltz with Bashir” in class

March 21, 2019:

- Things change in the 1980s: Mizrahi political awakening, popular and commercially viable Mizrahi music and literature, and a more globalized cultural scene in Israel
  - Abu, Ofir. "Citizenship, Identity, and Ethnic Mobilization in Israel: the Mizrahi Democratic Rainbow – Between Universalism and Particularism," Guy Ben-Porat and Bryan S. Turner (eds.), *The Contradictions of Israeli Citizenship: Land, Religion and State* (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), 111-134.
  - Regev, Motti, and Seroussi, Edwin. *Popular Music and National Culture in Israel*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004. Pp. 173-188

**Week 10:**

March 26, 2019:

- 1990s & the Oslo peace process: a time of hope, a time of despair and a time of change in Israel
  - Grossman, David. *Sleeping on a Wire: Conversations with Palestinians in Israel*. New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Groux, 1993. Pp. 80-100.
  - Morgan, Marcyliena, and Dionne Bennett. "Hip-Hop & the Global Imprint of a Black Cultural Form." *MIT Press Journals*. 2011.
  - Shapira, Anita. *Israel: A History*. Boston: Brandeis UP, 2012. Pp. 422-467

March 28, 2019:

- Ethiopian Immigration in the 1980s and 90s: new culture, religious identity, and aesthetic for Israel
  - Kaplan, Steven. "Tama Galut Etiopiya: The Ethiopian Exile Is Over." *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* 14.2 (2005): 381-96.
  - Offer, Shira. "The Socio-Economic Integration of the Ethiopian Community in Israel." *International Migration*, 42.3, 2004, 29–55.
  - Shalev, Ben. "The Ethiopian Music Scene in Israel Begins to Take Center Stage." *Haaretz*, 30 Sept. 2018.

**Week 11:**

April 2, 2019:

*1 million Russians Jews emigrate to Israel in the 1990s: music, literature, pork, the Russian language and a Jewish status often questioned by Israel's Rabbinic Authority*

- Immigration and integration
  - Khanin, Vladimir (Ze'ev). "Russian-Jewish Political Experience in Israel: Patterns, Elites and Movements." *Israel Affairs* 17.1 (2011): 55-71.
  - Remennick, Larissa. "Transnational Community in the Making: Russian-Jewish Immigrants of the 1990s in Israel." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 28.3 (2002): 515-30.

April 4, 2019:

- Literature, Russian-Israeli identity & cultural impacts + research paper writing session
  - Moore-Gilbert, Kylie. "Aliyah and Identity in Israeli-Russian Literature." *Transnational Literature*, 7: 1 (2014): 1-11.
  - Rubina, Dina. "Fog." *Life Stories: Original Works by Russian Writers, Stories for Good*, Mountpelier: RIS, Inc., 2009.
  - **Fine-tuning a paper and getting it ready to submit (last 30 minutes of class)**

**Week 12:**

April 9, 2019:

*Arab-Israeli culture – 20% of the Jewish state's population is not Jewish*

- The history and segments of Israel's Arab population
  - Bligh, Alexander. *The Israeli Palestinians: An Arab Minority in the Jewish State*. London: Cass, 2007. Pp. 119 -144, 161-180

April 11, 2019:

- Cultural output of Israel's Arab population
  - Hazboun, Areej. "Living in Israel, Traveling to Beirut, Singing for Palestine." *Times of Israel* [Tel Aviv] 17 Oct. 2014. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/living-in-israel-traveling-to-beirut-singing-for-palestine/>
  - Watch and discuss episodes of Sayed Kashua's "Arab Labor" in class

**Week 13:**



April 16, 2019:

*Israel's diverse, contemporary cultural landscape: why do attendees at non-orthodox Ashkenazi-Israeli weddings dance to Mizrahi music and eat sushi?*

- Jewish religion and its place in Israel
  - Edelman, Martin. "A Portion of Animosity: The Politics of the Disestablishment of Religion in Israel." *Israel Studies*, 5: 1 (2000): 204-227.
  - Hermann, Tager; Fisher, Shlomo Cohen, Asher Susser, Bernar Leon, Nissim; and Yaacov Yadgar. "The "Religionization" of Israeli Society." *Israel Studies Review*, 27: 1 (2012): 1-30.

April 18, 2019:

- Other major tensions within contemporary Israeli society
  - Tal, Alon. "Racing Toward Disaster: Israel's Unstable Population Bomb," *Jerusalem Post*, September 24, 2017. <http://www.jpost.com/Jerusalem-Report/Racing-toward-disaster-Israels-unsustainable-population-bomb-504249>
  - Bousso, Nimrod. "There Goes the Neighborhood? The Ugly Side of Gentrification in Israel." *Haaretz* [Tel Aviv] 28 July 2016. <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/business/MAGAZINE-there-goes-the-neighborhood-the-ugly-side-of-gentrification-in-israel-1.5417637>

#### **Week 14:**

April 23, 2019:

How Israel's geography, geology, culture and society all impact one another – regional implications?

- Ghert-Zand, Renee. "Israel's First Jordanian PhD Wants to Bring Peace through Water." *The Times of Israel* [Tel Aviv] 25 May 2015, [www.timesofisrael.com/israels-first-jordanian-phd-wants-to-bring-peace-through-water/](http://www.timesofisrael.com/israels-first-jordanian-phd-wants-to-bring-peace-through-water/)
- Times of Israel Staff. "Israel Enters 6th Year of Worst-in-a-Century Drought, Girds for Even Worse." *The Times of Israel* [Tel Aviv], 26 Aug. 2018, [www.timesofisrael.com/israel-enters-6th-year-of-worst-in-a-century-drought-girds-for-even-worse/](http://www.timesofisrael.com/israel-enters-6th-year-of-worst-in-a-century-drought-girds-for-even-worse/)

April 25, 2019:

- What is the future of Israeli culture and society? A look into what is next and how Israel is planning for the coming decades.

**\*Final paper due May 3, 2019 at 5:00pm. They can be emailed to me as a Microsoft word file at [sperring.eli@emory.edu](mailto:sperring.eli@emory.edu) or left in my box as a paper hard copy.**