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:**


**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):


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 18th and 19th centuries

January 17, 2019:
• Jewish Culture before Zionism, antisemitism, and transitioning towards a “new Jew”
  
  

**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?

  

January 24, 2019:

• Early Zionism and the origins of Hebrew culture: tensions, diversity and the emergence of Zionist organizations & institutions

  
  

**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


January 31, 2019:

- Hebrew Culture and the Hebrew Language

**Week 4:**

February 5, 2019:

- Nativness and the Hebrew folk song: *shirei eretz yisrael*

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


February 14, 2019:

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

- Mamlachiut, Civil Religion, and Cultural output

*Week 6:*
February 19, 2019:

- Statist-establishment views on the Holocaust and Israeli identity in 1950s and 60s

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

*Week 7:*
February 26, 2019:

- Mizrahi Cultural output: broadening Israeliness and the definition of the new Jew
February 28, 2019:

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

- June 1967 War

Week 8:
March 5, 2019:

- June 67 War Continued – watch “Avanti Popolo” in class

- October 1973 War

March 7, 2019 -- Mid Term

Spring Break: March 11-15

Week 9:
March 19, 2019:

- 1982 Lebanon War

- 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


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


March 28, 2019:

- Ethiopian Immigration in the 1980s and 90s: new culture, religious identity, and aesthetic for Israel


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

April 4, 2019:

- Literature, Russian-Israeli identity & cultural impacts + research paper writing session
  - **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

April 11, 2019:

- Cultural output of Israel’s Arab population
  - 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

April 18, 2019:

- Other major tensions within contemporary Israeli society

**Week 14:**

April 23, 2019:

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


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 sperling.eli@emory.edu or left in my box as a paper hard copy.