Course goals and Description:

General:
Overview of some central social issues in Israeli society through the perspective of Israeli cinema. To recognize the ways in which Israeli films present and relate to social issues, and their connection to changes taking place in Israeli society. To determine how this is related to the dynamic development of Israeli film culture.

Questions:
1. What is political social reality?
2. To what extent and in what way is it possible, desirable or even necessary to reflect this reality in cinema?
3. Did Israeli cinema always deal with social questions; was it always political?
4. What is the difference, if any, between political and apolitical cinema?
5. Can we discern such phenomena in Israeli cinema?
6. Can we describe “Israeliness” in Israeli cinema?
7. In what ways is it the same and different from non-Israeli cinema in the way it relates to society and politics?
8. What are the different characteristics of dealing with social and political subjects in the developing Israeli documentary field?

Field of Education and Discipline(s): Israel studies, Communication, Sociology

Course Structure and Teaching Method

Total # of credits: 4
ECTS (European Credit Transfer System): 6

Course Requirements
Students will write two papers on two different films choosing from two different categories. The first paper (serving as a midterm) is due after week 5. The second will serve as a final exam and is due by the end of week 13. Students will write journal entries which they will submit after each session by e-mail to the instructor. In order to get a grade, 12 entries must be posted.

**Structure of Final Course Grades**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance, journal entries and participation in class</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midterm paper</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final paper</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

100%

**Course Schedule Layout:**

**Week 1: Introduction to problems in Israel society**

General introduction to the major issues in Israeli society through the film: Ha-Chayim Al-Pi Agfa (Life According to AGFA) 1992, directed by Asi Dayan

**Weeks 2 – 3: Eastern-Western inner conflict**

Following the book by Ella Shohat Israeli cinema: East West and the politics of representation, we will examine how the film “Sallah Shabbati” served the common conceptions concerning the lower class status of Eastern Jews (Mizrahim, Jews from North Africa). These perceptions filtered down to almost all of the more popular Israeli films (known as “Bourekas” films) for a long period of time. We will also look at films which center around Mizrahi families who succeed in escaping the stereotypes of the Bourkas films, which displayed an emerging new concept of ethnicity in Israel. We will also look at “Turn Left at the End of the World”, and one of Yamin Masika’s films.

**Weeks 4 – 5: Arabs in Israeli society**

At the end of the 1970’s and during the 1980’s films about Israel’s political ethnos began to be made. These were generally perceived to reflect the left wing side of the Israeli political spectrum. Such films as “The Goat’s Smile”, “Hamsin”, “A Narrow Bridge”, “Avanti Popolo”, “Fictitious Marriage”, and “Hide and Seek” began to show the Arab perspective in a more positive way. Ella Shohat called these films, “the Palestinian Wave”. In these sessions we will focus on Israeli Arabs, and view one of the more popular such films which also was nominated for the Oscar for Best Foreign Movie “Behind Bars”. We will also look at another Oscar nominated film “Ajami”.

**Weeks 6 – 7: The Palestinian-Israeli conflict**

This will continue the theme by presenting films which have to do more directly with Palestinians or other Arabs and Israelis. One film will be the highly praised “The Band’s Visit”, and we will also view “Fictitious Marriage”.

**Weeks 8 – 9: Religious Streams**
These weeks will focus on the strains within Israel society concerning religion. One film, “The Tribes Bonfire”, will illuminate the problems concerning religious settlers, and we will also screen “Summer Vacation” which examines the tensions surrounding the ultra-Orthodox society.

Week 10: Women as “other” in Israeli Cinema

We will examine women in films and feminist film theory through the use of concepts of that theory such as: representation, gaze, patriarchal order. We will view “Athaliah” (and in general the work of the director Michal Bat Adam), “Tel Aviv Stories”, “Or” (Ronit Alkabetz), and “The Summer of Aviyah” (Gilah Almagor).

Week 11: Gays as “other” in Israeli Cinema

We will concentrate on the short film “After” by the director Eitan Fox, and look at some scenes from some of his other movies in which the status of gays is presented.

Weeks 12 – 13: The Working Class, Kibbutz and Documentaries

We will view some films about the working class versus bureaucracy, such as “Blaumilch’s Canal”, and examine documentary film making by seeing “Children of the Sun” about the Kibbutz and utopia.

Selected Bibliography


