

Ben-Gurion University of the Negev

The Ben-Gurion Research Institute for the Study of Israel & Zionism

The Pen and the Sword: Israeli Literature of War

16-2-3030 (2)

Fall 2018

Thursday, 12:30 pm – 14:00 pm

**Ruth Eliav Classroom, Sde Boker Campus, The Ben-Gurion Research Institute
for the Study of Israel & Zionism**

Dr. Yael Dekel

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Office hours: by appointment

Course Description

In this course we will take a close look at Israeli works of fiction and poetry, in English translation. The aim of this course is twofold: to introduce the students to Israeli literature and to its historical context, and simultaneously to develop critical thinking. We will ask: What is the role of literature in political conflict, and in a state of war? Students will not only learn about the historical context of Israeli literature post-1948, but will be introduced to the meta-literary questions of political discourse and minor literature. We will problematize notions of national narrative and national literature, discussing and analyzing the main issues with which this literature engages, such as the national subject, gender, self and other, identity and counter identity. We will read texts from a variety of times and contexts written by, *inter alia*: S. Yizhar, Amos Oz and Shani Boianjiu. In addition, the course will introduce the case of Palestinian authors writing in Hebrew, through texts by Salman Masalha and Sayed Kashua.

Teaching Method

This course will be based on reading done at home and group discussion in class. The students should prepare their weekly assigned readings and come to class with

significant questions that stem from the readings.

Course Requirements

Attendance is mandatory. Students are required to have read and thought about the assigned texts prior to the session in which they will be discussed.

Course grade will be based on class attendance, knowledge of readings and active participation (25%), on three response papers (25%) and on a final presentation and paper (50%).

Course Schedule Layout:

1. What is a Nation?

- **Oct-18-2018:** Imagined Community
Reading: Ernest Renan, "What is a Nation"? ; Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (excerpts).
- **Oct-25-2018:** Orientalism
Reading: Edward Said, *Orientalism*, "Introduction"; Moshe Smilansky, "Latifa".

2. Pre-State Concepts: Narrating the Nation

- **Nov-1-2018:** The Task of the National Poet
Reading: Haim Nachman Bialik, "In the City of Slaughter"
Secondary sources: John Hutchinson, "The Artist as Nation Builder: William Butler Yeats and Chaim Nachman Bialik"; Tamar Mayer, "From Zero to Hero: Masculinity in Jewish Nationalism".
- **Nov-8-2018:** Signs of Nativity?
Reading: Moshe Smilansky, "Hawaja Nazar".

3. Sounds of Silence

- **Nov-15-2018 :** A Prisoner within Silence
Reading: S. Yizhar, "The Prisoner"
Secondary Source: Hannan Hever, "Mapping Literary Spaces: Territory and Violence in Israeli Literature".
- **Nov-22-2018:** Who is the Victim?
Reading: S. Yizhar, "Hirbet Hizaa"

- **Nov-29-2018:** Muting the Other
Readings: A.B Yehoshua, "Facing the Forests"

4. The Canaanite Movement

- **Dec-6-2018:** Whose War is it, anyway?
Reading: Eitan Notev, "Praise the Lord", "The Battle of Fort Williams";
Secondary Source: Yacov Shavit, "The Emergence of Canaanism from
Hebraism: Mood and Ideology," From: *The New Hebrew Nation*.

5. Gender and the Military

- **Dec-13-2018:** Masculinity?
Reading: Amos Oz, "The Way of the Wind"
Secondary Source: Orna Sasson-Levy, "Gender Performance in a
Changing Military: Women Soldiers in 'Masculine' Roles".
- **Dec-20-2018:** Bereverment
- Yehudit Hendel, "Apples in Honey".
- **Dec-27-2018:** Heroism Revisited
Reading: Shani Boianjiu, "Means of Suppressing Demonstrations"

6. Writing from Right to Left

- **Jan-3-2018:** I Write Hebrew
Reading: Salman Masalha and Anton Shammas, selected poems;
Sayed Kashua, *Native*, selections.
Secondary Source: Reuven Snir, "'Hebrew as the Language of Grace':
Arab-Palestinian Writers in Hebrew".
- **Jan-10-2018:** Final Presentations