

Cambridge University, Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies

Israel: The Invention of a Culture (MES 40)

Course Description:

Dynamic, brash, daring, innovative and even sexy are all images that are associated with Israel and Israelis today. These images are not only relatively new -- less than 50 years old -- but were not traditionally associated with Jews who were often seen as subordinate, weak, craven and decidedly unsexy. How did this change come about and within a remarkably short span of time? Focusing on the Zionist revolution of the 20th century and the many cultural innovations it inspired, this course explores the new ideas and practices about language, literature, body, sexuality, visual culture, music, art and architecture that shaped the modern Israel we know today.

Course sessions will be divided into discussion of assigned readings and film viewing and lectures on the historical and political background of each period or topic.

Course Requirements

The course will meet only during the Michaelmas term, 2013, but students will continue working on it throughout the academic year by producing a 6000-7500 word research paper submitted no later than May 9, 2014. Students will also have three supervisions connected with the research paper, one during each term.

Required Readings and viewing

- Theodore Herzl, *Altneuland* (available online at: <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Zionism/altneulandI.html>)
- Articles and other readings (pdf)
- Films: *Avoda*, *Hill 24 Doesn't Answer*, *Children of the Sun*

SYLLABUS

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| Oct 10 | INTRODUCTION

Even-Zohar, "The Emergence of a Native Hebrew Culture in Palestine, 1882-1948."
Mosse, "The Jews and the Civic Religion of Nationalism."

Book: Herzl, <i>Altneuland</i> |
| Oct 17 | Berkowitz, Zionist Culture and West European Jewry, "Introduction."
Dieckhoff, "Introduction, Zionism as the Political Invention of a Nation."

Book: Herzl, <i>Altneuland</i> |
| Oct 24 | INVENTING A LANGUAGE AND A LITERATURE

Halkin, <i>Modern Hebrew Literature</i> , "The Quest for a New Life."
Dieckhoff, "Hebrew, The Language of the Nation."
Halkin, <i>Modern Hebrew Literature</i> , "The Transvaluation of Values"

Short story: M. Y. Berdichevsky, "Red Heifer" |

Short story: Y. H. Brenner, "Nerves"

Oct 31 CULTURAL TRADITIONS: ART, MUSIC, HOLIDAYS

Presner, "The Aesthetics of Regeneration."
Freund, "The Mystery of the Menorah and the Star."
Guesnet, "Chanukah and Its Function in the Invention of a Jewish-Heroic Tradition in Early Zionism, 1880-1900."
Bohlman, "Before Hebrew Song."
Hirshberg, "Music of the People, Music for the People."
"Inventing a tradition of Folksongs"

Nov 7 A NEW JEWISH BODY

Mosse, "Max Nordau, Liberalism and the New Jew"
Zimmermann, "Muscle Jews versus Nervous Jews"
Reuveni, "Sports and the Militarization of Jewish Society" (Reuveni).
Spiegelman, "The First Maccabiah, 1932"

Nov 14 Peleg, *Orientalism and the Hebrew Imagination*, "Introduction"
"Out of the Book and into the Desert"
Biale, "Zionism as an Erotic Revolution"

Short story: Smilansky, "Hawadja Nazer"
Film: *Avoda*

Nov 21 Almog, "Translator's Note" & "Idealistic Euphoria."
"The Myth of the Fighting Sabra."
"Dunce Cap."
"The Stamp of His Country's Landscape."
"Monks in Khaki."
Film: *Hill 24 Doesn't Answer*

Nov 28 BUILDING A COUNTRY, SETTLEMENT DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE

Zerubavel, "Desert and Settlement."
M&B Chyutin, "Utopian Settlements in Israel"
"Paths in Utopia: On the Development of the Early Kibbutzim"
M&B Chyutin, "The Kibbutz: A Communal Society, section I."
"The Garden City Idea as Adopted by the Zionist Establishment"
"The Geddes Vision of the Region as a City – Palestine as a 'Polis'"

Film: *Children of the Sun*