

Introduction to Modern Hebrew Literature: 100 Years of Hebrew Fiction

LIT 020: Fall 2006
M, F — 11:15 a.m.-12:40 p.m.
DAVISON 0018

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“Every book one opens, one finds in it things not found before.”—S. Y. Agnon

”כל ספר שפותחים מוצאים בו מזה שלא מצאו בו קודם.”—ש.י. עגנון

Required Texts:

- 1) Course Reader: “LIT 020: Introduction to Modern Hebrew Literature.”
- 2) Oz, Amos. *Panther in the Basement*. Trans. Nicholas de Lange. New York: Harvest Books, 1998. ISBN: 0156006308
- 3) Appelfeld, Aharon. *Badenheim 1939* (The B. G. Rudolph Lectures in Judaic Studies). Trans. Betsy Rosenberg. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse UP, 2001. ISBN: 0815629354

Text (1) is only available to students of this class, and is only available for purchase at the FedEx Kinko’s located a 5 minute drive from campus at 581 Stewart Ave., Garden City, NY. (Phone: 516-222-9352). Texts (2) and (3) are available for purchase through the Hofstra University bookstore, or at various on-line retailers. Please take care to purchase the editions I have indicated as there are several significant variants of text (3); **please refer to the ISBN** when purchasing on-line.

Materials from the course reader will also be made available as the semester progresses via the Electronic Reserve system, which is accessible through Blackboard. This serves the interest of student convenience, allowing students to access the reading remotely. However, students will be responsible for bringing the texts to class, whether purchased as a bound reader, or printed out through the Electronic Reserve system.

Recommended Text:

The outlines for a number of the lectures in this class follow the historical approach developed by Gershon Shaked. A translated and edited version of his insights in to Hebrew literature can be found in a one volume edition, *Modern Hebrew Literature*. Trans. Yael Lotan. Bloomington, IN: Indiana UP, 2000 [ISBN: 0253337119]. I recommend purchasing or consulting this text as an additional resource, particularly if you have difficulty taking clear notes.

Aims & Philosophy:

This course is structured to pursue 4 major goals:

- To provide students with an historical approach to the development of modern Hebrew literature
- To introduce students to comparative methodologies in order to contextualize Hebrew literature as a world literature
- To improve students’ critical reading and thinking skills
- To exercise students’ powers for analytical thought and creative problem solving through written and oral exercises

This course offers a survey of some of the most significant works of modern Hebrew literary fiction available in translation. Students will consider how the development of Hebrew literature has contributed to the formation of contemporary Israeli identity, and how the conflicts that define the turbulent history of Israel are treated in works of prose fiction by canonical authors. The selection of diverse voices and literary materials exposes students to the social, political, and historical changes wrought by the rise of modern day Israel. Through lectures, close-reading, and exercises, students will gain an appreciation for some of the fundamental tensions that define Hebrew literature and Israeli culture: East vs. West, collective vs.

individual, religious vs. secular, Jew vs. Arab, Diaspora vs. Zion, and Ashkenazi vs. Sephardi. Through careful textual analysis, students will discern the principal elements of narrative and how they assert themselves across time, between cultures, and in different genres. Such a study aims to reveal the layers of intertextuality in Hebrew literature and a continual re-writing of tradition. Readings are roughly chronological, and will be drawn from a variety of sources. Students will be coached on various interpretive strategies, the intent of which is to make their time spent reading more valuable. **While helpful, no knowledge of Hebrew, Jewish tradition, or Israeli history is necessary.**

Clear written expression and analytical thought are two of the most highly regarded skills. This class encourages the development of good writing habits through in-class writing, formal writing assignments, and essay intensive exams. Analytical thinking is strengthened through use. The Socratic method is employed to aid students in bringing their critical resources to bear on the course materials. This course is designed to encourage students to make the most of their education by liberating their potential for individual thought and strengthening their initiative to apply their thinking beyond the classroom.

The focus of this class is on the development of modern Hebrew fiction spanning the period roughly between 1880-1990. Students should therefore expect to read a **significant** amount of literature for every class period. As we learn to read Hebrew literature in a thoughtful and critical manner, students will gain an appreciation for what narrative expression can contribute to our understanding of the human condition. Students are expected to reflect upon the assigned readings both in class discussions and in written exercises. Classroom discussion is essential for developing critical reasoning skills and will therefore be emphasized. This is an introductory course and will not require extensive consultation of critical or theoretical materials. However, the readings for this class demand a considerable investment of time and their analysis requires intellectual rigor. You will be responsible for keeping up with the reading. The best way to effectively assimilate the concepts in our reading will be to take notes outlining the material read for homework. I conduct class based on the assumption that students employ this strategy.

Quizzes, Exams and Papers

At various points in the semester, students may be given unannounced **quizzes**. This depends on the progress of the course and is at the discretion of the instructor. Students who miss a quiz due to absence will be given a make-up opportunity.

This class has both a scheduled **take-home midterm** and a **take-home final** that will contain 1-2 essay questions. An **in-class** portion of these exams will cover conceptual vocabulary and contain short answer questions. Please refer to the “reading schedule” for the dates of these exams.

There will be **two formal papers** for this class in which students will be asked to analyze one or more literary works. These papers emphasize close reading skills developed in class and do not require research, only thoughtful analysis. Students who wish to submit a draft may do so **at least** 3-4 days prior to the final due date in order to receive written feedback. There will also be **one short response paper** late in the semester in which students will be asked to comment on one or more aspects of a novel. Students will receive a detailed assignment sheet for each paper later in the semester. Papers and take-home exams are to be handed in typed, double-spaced, in 12pt. Times New Roman (or equivalent) font, with standard 1” margins. Work may be submitted electronically as a Word .doc or .pdf file attached to e-mail correspondence. However, students who submit work electronically assume the risks related to e-mail communication. As the semester progresses, I will try to set up a network folder for students who wish to upload their work directly. At this time, I prefer not to have students hand in work to Blackboard.

Students **may not** hand in untyped work. Students who attempt to hand in late papers should know that no matter how good their paper or exam is, it will receive a **failing grade**. Students who do not submit all papers as required will **fail the course automatically**. My standards are high; if you do not feel you have mastered the rules of formal written English, you should consider enrolling in a composition course before taking this class. Prior academic preparation may therefore affect your performance in this class. If I feel that

you will benefit from focused writing instruction, you may be asked to complete additional grammar worksheets. I will endeavor to return all assignments in a timely fashion and with substantial comments. I am happy to go over any comments or questions you have based on my feedback, but please refer to my re-grade policy (below) should you want me to reassess your work.

Classroom Discussion:

One cannot learn to think critically without subjecting one's own thoughts to competing and conflicting thoughts. Thinking is an act; it is both private and public. Therefore, speaking in class, as well as listening to others speak, is essential and expected. Students should expect to volunteer and be called on to discuss their thoughts on the readings. Disagreement is not a bad thing—challenging one another's conceptions is crucial to a vibrant learning environment. I welcome divergent positions that are expressed in an articulate and civil manner. Students are expected to be polite and professional in expressing disagreements with one another and with the instructor.

At a few points during the semester, students **may** be asked to write brief, in-class "low stakes" assignments which will **not** be graded. However, if students do not focus their attention on doing these low stakes writings, points will be deducted from classroom participation (discussed below). This low stakes writing is meant to serve as a springboard for discussion and provides a chance for students to get immediate feedback on their work from the instructor.

Attendance:

Without active and lively discussion, thinking loses its potency. Without students, there is no forum for discussion. Students are expected to come to every class **on time**. I intend to begin and end every class on time. **Do not arrive late**. If you find yourself arriving after class has begun, please enter quietly and unobtrusively. **Do not leave early**. If you must leave class early for one reason or another, please do me the courtesy of informing me at the beginning of class. Please inform me in advance of special circumstances such as religious holidays which may require you to be absent. If you are the victim of an emergency or serious illness that will require an extended absence, please notify me by e-mail or phone so that I can help you stay current with your obligations. I will take roll, but will only begin to deduct for **each absence exceeding five**. For the sixth and each subsequent absence, I will deduct 10 points from class participation (Six absences = 25% of class meetings). This is a liberal policy and is designed to foster responsible student decision making. However, **be aware** that missing even one class can set you back significantly. Students who are absent are asked to review the notes of a classmate before coming in to speak with me about the material covered. Once a student makes this effort, I will be happy to meet and discuss specific questions. I will not "reteach" the class during my office hours or serve as a personal tutor for students who do not come to class. Students are responsible for their own success and should read and outline before class, take notes during class, and participate in discussions.

Plagiarism & Cheating:

Plagiarism is the intentional use of another's words and/or ideas without citation. It is an admission that you have nothing to say. This course is designed to give students the confidence to pursue individual lines of thinking, hopefully by-passing the problem of plagiarism entirely. If you plagiarize or cheat, you will be subject to serious disciplinary measures which may include failure, suspension, dismissal, or other penalty. Please refer to the latest Hofstra Student Bulletin for further information on disciplinary procedures relating to academic misconduct.

Office Hours & Conferences:

I will be available during my office hours **Monday from 1:30-2:30**, and **by appointment from 4:30-5:30**. My office hours **Wednesday are from 12:40 until 2:40**, and **by appointment from 4:30-5:30**. I am also available on **Friday from 1:30-3:30 by appointment**. To schedule an appointment, you can speak with me before or after class or send me an e-mail with your requested slot. I will respond by e-mail to confirm or suggest an alternate slot should your preference already be booked. I am happy to schedule individual appointments at other times for those students unable to meet with me during my office hours due to

legitimate scheduling conflicts. Students are encouraged to meet with me several times during the semester. I am available for academic advising and consultation, as well as additional discussion and review of course materials (provided you have sought out notes from a classmate if you have been absent). I will treat all conversations as confidential and will direct you to appropriate resources should I be unable to offer assistance. Students may also contact me with their academic questions by e-mail, or when appropriate, by phone.

Website:

The class website is available through the Blackboard system, accessible with your User ID and Password at <https://hofstra.blackboard.com/webapps/login/>. Students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with Blackboard, and for checking the course site for announcements, scheduling changes, and supplementary materials. Various graphic image links will be provided for many of our reading assignments and may be referred to in lectures, discussion, and exams. Descriptions of all assignments will be posted to Blackboard and all conceptual vocabulary words will be posted there for you.

Grading:

I encourage students to spend their time reading, writing and thinking. I do not believe that students should spend their time dwelling on their grades. However, I realize that it is necessary to establish how I will evaluate your work. There are a total of at least **550** possible points in the semester. The two **analysis papers** will be worth 100 points each (total **200**). The **midterm** and **final** will each be worth 100 points (total **200**). The response paper will be worth **50** points. Classroom discussion will count for **100** points and will be awarded as follows: each student begins the semester with 100 participation points. Students are expected to be prepared for class when called upon and will be asked to summarize stories and lecture points, respond to questions, trace connections between readings, and undertake in-class writings where relevant. Each time a student is demonstrably unprepared or inattentive when called upon, he or she loses 10 points.

Grades are not curved. I see no point in encouraging you to succeed due to another student's failure. Likewise, a grade for a written project reflects my sense of an absolute score, not a moving target. Your work will be evaluated solely based on its quality as a finished product that adheres to the detailed criteria for evaluation that will be provided to you for each paper. I strive to treat all serious work fairly and honestly. If you submit inappropriate or patently offensive work, please note that I will call this to your attention. I believe that grades only serve a purpose when they guide students toward improvement; grades should be evaluative, not punitive. To that end, I strive to provide clear comments and justifiable assessments in addition to a number grade on formal written assignments. My grading scale in the past has been:

A+ = 97+	A 94-96	A- 90-93	B+ 87-89	B 83-86	B- 80-82	C+ 77-79	C 74-76	C- 70-73	+D- 60-69
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Should you request me to **re-grade** your assignment, my policy is as follows: you must first write a civil, grammatically correct paragraph describing what you think I overlooked about your assignment. Perhaps you feel that your work has fulfilled the major criteria for evaluation and that I have not been attentive enough to it. Once I receive your paragraph, I will also solicit from you the original assignment I handed back to you containing my comments. When this is received, I will review it to determine if the grade should be adjusted. Please be aware that grades can change both to your advantage and to your disadvantage.

THE INSTRUCTOR RESERVES THE RIGHT TO ALTER THESE POLICIES AT HIS DISCRETION TO SUIT PEDAGOGIC AIMS OR SCHEDULING NECESSITIES, BUT HE WILL GIVE ADEQUATE NOTICE OF ANY CHANGES.

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*** Please have the reading assignments completed for the day they are listed below.

*** Assigned readings that require page numbers and/or chapters for clarification appear below in [].

WEEK 1	Overview & Description
Mon 9/4	Labor Day / Classes Not in Session
Fri 9/8	Description of course objectives, methods, materials, and responsibilities ➤ Narrative Profile Assigned
WEEK 2	Unit I: From Advent to Ascent (1880s-1920s)
Mon 9/11	Introductions <u>Mendele Mokher Sefarim</u> : “Shem and Yaphet on a Train” [מנדלי מוכר-ספרים: "שם ויפת בעגלה"] ➤ Narrative Profile Due
Fri 9/15	<u>H. N. Bialik</u> : “Short Friday” [חיים נחמן ביאליק: "יום הששי הקצר" / "גילוי וכיסוי בלשון"]
WEEK 3	Unit I: From Advent to Ascent (1880s-1920s)
Mon 9/18	<u>Micha Yosef Berdyczewski</u> : “The Red Heifer” [מיכה יוסף ברדיצבסקי: "פרה אדומה"] ➤ Analysis Paper #1 assigned and explained
Fri 9/22 [ערב ראש השנה] Erev Rosh HaShanah	<u>Yosef Chaim Brenner</u> : <i>Nerves</i> [יוסף חיים ברנר: עצבים]
WEEK 4	Unit II: S. Y. Agnon’s New Hebrew Fiction (1908-WWII)
Mon 9/25	<u>S. Y. Agnon</u> : “Agunot” & “The Kerchief” [שמואל יוסף עגנון: "עגונות" / "המטפחת"]
Fri 9/29	<u>S. Y. Agnon</u> : “Tale of a Scribe” & “At the Outset of the Day” [שמואל יוסף עגנון: "אגדת הסופר" / "עם כניסת היום"] ➤ Analysis Paper #1 due
WEEK 5	Unit II: Agnon’s New Hebrew Fiction (post-WWII)
Mon 10/2 [יום כיפור] Yom Kippur	Classes Not in Session
Fri 10/6 [ערב סוכות] Erev Sukkot	<u>S. Y. Agnon</u> : “The Lady and the Pedlar” [שמואל יוסף עגנון: "האדונית והרוכל"]
WEEK 6	Unit III: Establishing the National Narrative (1930s-1950s)
Mon 10/9	<u>Chaim Hazaz</u> : “The Sermon” [חיים הזז: "הדרשה"] <u>Moshe Shamir</u> : “With His Own Hands” [משה שמיר: מתוך כמו ידיו]
Fri 10/13 [ערב שימחת תורה] Erev Simchat Torah	<u>Benyamin Tammuz</u> : “The Swimming Contest” [בנימין תמוז: "תחרות שחיה"] <u>S. Yizhar</u> : “The Prisoner” [ס. יזהר: "השבוי"]
WEEK 7	Unit III: Establishing the National Narrative (1930s-1950s)
Mon 10/16	<u>Aharon Megged</u> : “The Name” [אהרן מגד: "יד ושם"] ➤ In Class Critical Vocabulary & Conceptual Short Answer Exam ➤ Take Home Midterm Essay Exam Assigned & Explained

Fri 10/20	No Class [American Literary Translators Association Conference]
WEEK 8	Unit IV: Encountering the National Narrative—The Individual (1950s-1960s)
Mon 10/23	<u>Yakov Shabtai</u> : “A Very Private & Awesome Leopard” [יעקב שבתאי: "נמר-הברבורות פרטי ומטיל אימה"] <u>David Shahar</u> : “Pope’s Moustache” [דוד שחר: "שפמו של האפיפיור"] ➤ Take Home Midterm Due
Fri 10/27	<u>Amalia Kahana-Carmon</u> : “Bridal Veil” [עמליה כהנא-כרמון: "היגומה"] <u>Amos Oz</u> : “Nomad & Viper” [עמוס עוז: "נוודים וצפע"]
WEEK 9	Unit IV: Encountering the National Narrative—The Shoah (1960s)
Mon 10/30	<u>Yoram Kaniuk</u> : <i>Adam Resurrected</i> [יורם קניוק: מתוך <i>אדם בן כלב</i>]
Fri 11/3	<u>Yoram Kaniuk</u> : <i>Adam Resurrected</i> continued & review
WEEK 10	Unit IV: Encountering the National Narrative—War & Conflict (1970-1980s)
Mon 11/6	<u>A. B. Yehoshua</u> : “Facing the Forest” [א. ב. יהושע: "מול היערות"]
Fri 11/10	<u>A. B. Yehoshua</u> : “Mr. Mani” [א. ב. יהושע: "מר מאני"] ➤ Analysis Paper #2 assigned and explained
WEEK 11	Unit V: Imagining the Shoah (1970s-1980s)
Mon 11/13	<u>Aharon Appelfeld</u> : <i>Badenheim 1939</i> [אהרן אפלפלד: <i>בדנהיים עור נופש</i>]
Fri 11/17	<u>David Grossman</u> : “Momik” [pp. 3-51] [דויד גרוסמן: "מומיק" מתוך <i>עייני ערך</i> : אהבה]
WEEK 12	Unit V: Imagining the Shoah (1970s-1980s)
Mon 11/20	<u>David Grossman</u> : “Momik” [pp. 51-end] ➤ Analysis Paper #2 due
Fri 11/24	Thanksgiving Recess / Classes Not in Session ➤ Remember to please read ahead in Oz
WEEK 13	Unit VI: From Basement to Roof (1980s-1990s)
Mon 11/27	<u>Amos Oz</u> : <i>Panther in the Basement</i> [Chapters 1-15] [עמוס עוז: <i>פנתר במרתף</i>]
Fri 12/1	<u>Amos Oz</u> : <i>Panther in the Basement</i> [Chapters 16-end]
WEEK 14	Unit VI: From Basement to Roof (1980s-1990s)
Mon 12/4	<u>Savyon Liebrecht</u> : “A Room on the Roof” [סביון ליברכט: "חדר על הגג"]
Fri 12/8	<u>Etgar Keret</u> : “Cocked & Locked” [אתגר קרת: "דרוך ונצור"] ➤ In Class Critical Vocabulary & Conceptual Short Answer Exam ➤ Take Home Final Assigned & Explained
WEEK 15	CONCLUSION
Mon 12/11	Summary and conclusion <u>Alona Kimchi</u> : “Lunar Eclipse” [אלונה קמחי: "ליקוי ירח"]
Fri 12/15	➤ Take Home Final Due by 5:00 p.m. in CLL office or electronically

Good Luck on Finals!