The Cinema and Literature of Israeli Religious Communities

Over the past two decades there has been a growing phenomenon of artists identified with religious communities in Israel. They work in a variety of art forms, including cinema, music, prose, poetry, dance, theatre, and plastic art. This phenomenon is interesting not only because it reveals changes unfolding within Israeli religious communities, but also because it reflects changes in the relationship between religion and nationalism. Also, of great interest are the changing perceptions of gender outside of the religious community. The course deals with literary and cinematic texts that were created by those identified with religious communities in Israel and those who live on the borderline between religious and secular. Through our discussion of a number of critical themes in Israeli religious discourse (sexuality, gender, relations with the secular world, etc.), we will also consider the borders of Israeli religious discourse, as well as the alternative and critical voices both within and outside the community.

Course requirements

- Attendance

- Written commentary on the weekly readings

- Final paper
Course program

Lesson 1: Introduction. Creation in Israeli religious communities and discourse boundaries

Indursky, Yehonatan. *Driver*. Israel, Sam Spiegel Film School, 2009 (film).

Lesson 2: Nationalism, secularization and Hebrew Literature


Lessons 3/4: Uprooting, secularization, nationalism and the male privilege of uprooting oneself


Lesson 5: The evolution of film in the religious community: first steps
Lessons 6-8: The religious community from the perspective of feminist criticism


Lessons 9-11: Homoeroticism in the religious community

English-language scholarship has addressed Judaism and homosexuality, whereas Hebrew scholarship has dealt with homosexuality in the Israeli religious community. (There are differences between these topics, and I am still deliberating on the scholarly reading list for the lesson.)


Lessons 12-14: Ethnicity and the religious community

Peleg, Yaron. "Marking a New Holy Community: God’s Neighbors and the Ascendancy of a New Religious Hegemony in Israel" *Jewish Film & New Media* 1, 1(2013): 64-86

Lessons 15-18

**Territory**, biblical rights, national home and private home

Hazani, Menorah, *The Skies are Closer in Homesh*. Israel, 2004 (film).
*Israel Affairs*, Special Issue: "Judea and Samaria's Jewish Settlers and Settlements – Cultural Sociology of Unsettled Space: A Look From Within."
Nissim, Leon. "Self-Segregation of the Vanguard: Judea and Samaria in the Religious-


Shenker, Yael. "Challenging the National Space: Jewish and Palestinian Settlements in Literature and Film by Religious-Zionist Israelis" (in progress).

---

Lessons 19-20/: National religious masculinity


Shenker, Yael. "A Room of His Own: On Men and Masculinities in Television Series About the Religious Community in Israel" (in the process of publication).

Lessons 21-23: Ultra-Orthodox femininity and masculinity

El-Or, Tamar. *Educated and Ignorant: Ultraorthodox Jewish Women and their World*. 
Lesson 24
Conclusion: religious identities in Israel
