

The Reel Israel: Studying Israel through Film

The study of Israel through film opens new horizons for the discussion of Israeli nationality, society, ethnicity, religion, culture and politics. Films from different periods, both feature films and documentaries, are fascinating historical-cultural documents for the study of their context of production, changing historical circumstances, and the inscription of history upon collective memory. When studied in a wider cultural context, the evolution of Israeli culture, the ideological struggles over national identity, and the tapestry of the Israeli scene can be envisaged in all of its richness.

However, for students in American academe, who often lack the solid foundation of historical facts and their contexts, our recommendation is to focus on documentary films, which can provide an authentic and intriguing spectacle of Israeli society, history, politics, and culture. Such documentary films, just like any other mediated media representations of social and political realities, should not be taken as non-biased, “objective” accounts of the “real” social and historical reality. Yet, they do provide the images, narratives, discourses and debates as recorded on film by Israelis in Israel, screened mostly on Israeli television, and viewed by Israelis as vehicles for self negotiation and reflection. In that sense, such documentary films provide an authentic account of Israeli realities, and in turn, may be considered as vital perspectives that enrich the discussion of Israel.

We have chosen several topics, themes and issues, which we conceive as basic and fundamental in a curriculum of Israel Studies. Under each topic we suggest several films, which provide multiple perspectives, test cases or variations on the theme. Such films offer an excellent starting point for a discussion, and ideally should be complemented with more facts and sources, preferably researched by the students themselves, as films do not present the whole picture. The films lay bare the contradictions, debates, problems, and complexities of Israeli society, politics and culture. They extend an open invitation for a discussion of these very complexities, therein lies their importance as multifaceted resources for educating about Israel.

We urge our colleagues to use this proposed repertory in a mix and match mode, as well as, to propose additions of both items and categories.

As for the use of feature films for the teaching of Israel: as a guiding principle, we believe that the teaching of cinema, communication arts, television and other media requires adequate academic expertise of these respective fields. Feature films are highly stylized and manipulative cultural artifacts, which can be dangerously taken at face value as dependable historical and factual documents. We therefore propose to use them

in teaching about Israel with this problematic in mind, and as a rule, accompanied with appropriate references to their scholarly reading as social or historical texts. We propose a limited list of feature films, which relate to Israeli history in a retrospective mode. The list specifies the decade and context depicted.

We find that the use of films as suggested here can offer a unique and fascinating venue for a discussion of the short yet eventful Israeli history. We hope that discussions evolving from the viewing of these films will motivate the pursuit of factual and unbiased study of Israeli history and its place in the Middle East, on the one hand, and greater, non-stereotypical awareness of the complexities of Israeli society, politics and culture on the other.

Topics in Israel Studies: Suggested Films for Course Use

Israel: A Visual History

Good Morning Israel (Amir Har-Gil, 2005)

http://www.dragomanfilms.com/GMI_ISRAEL60.html

Snapshots (Dov Gil-Har and Uri Rozen, 2008)

<http://www.israelifilms.co.il/40420/Snapshots>

Eye Witness (Micha Shagrir, 2008)

<http://www.ruthfilms.com/catalogsearch/result/?q=60+years+eye+witness&x=0&y=0>

Etz O Palestine (Nathan Axelrod, Yoel Zilberg, Uri Zohar, 1962)

<http://www.israelifilms.co.il/40420/Etz-O-Palestine>

The Israeli Kleidoscope: Young Israelis reflect on Israeli Identity

Unsettled (Adam Hootnick, 2007)

<http://www.dragomanfilms.com/unsettled.html>

On The Front Line (Hanoch Zeevi, 2002)

<http://www.ruthfilms.com/films/docs/israeli-mosaic/on-the-frontline.html>

The Name My Mother Gave Me (Eli Tal-El, 2008)

<http://www.ruthfilms.com/films/docs/israeli-mosaic/the-name-my-mother-gave-me.html>

Channels of Rage (Anat Halachmi, 2003)

<http://www.ruthfilms.com/catalogsearch/result/?q=Channels+of+Rage>

Out for Love, Be Back Shortly (Dan Kazir, 1997)

http://www.newlovefilms.com/film_detail.php?recordID=2

Company Jasmin (Yael Katzir, 2003)

http://www.newlovefilms.com/film_detail.php?recordID=5

Israeli Society: Ethnicities, Multiculturalism, Immigration

Jewish Secularism, Religious Judaism, and the Spectrum in Between

On The Front Line (Hanoch Zeevi, 2002)

<http://www.ruthfilms.com/films/docs/israeli-mosaic/on-the-frontline.html>

“Did Herzl Really Say That?” *Transparent Kippa* (Ido Bahat, 2006)

<http://www.ruthfilms.com/films/clusters/did-herzl-really-say-that/transparent-kippa.html>

Say Amen (David Deri, 2005)

<http://www.ruthfilms.com/catalogsearch/result/?q=say+amen>

Righteous Rabbis Tombs (Prosper Malka, 2005)

<http://www.israelifilms.co.il/40420/Righteous-Rabbis-Tombs>

Jerusalem Right - Tel Aviv Left (Alon Sharvit, 2006)

<http://www.israelifilms.co.il/40420/Jerusalem-Right---Tel-Aviv-Left>

Immigration

The Name My Mother Gave Me (Eli Tal-El, 2008)

<http://www.ruthfilms.com/films/docs/israeli-mosaic/the-name-my-mother-gave-me.html>

The Pioneers (Sigalit Banai, 2008)

<http://www.israelifilms.co.il/40420/The%2DPioneers%2D1>

“Did Herzl Really Say That?” *Israel our home?* (Ido Bahat, 2006)

<http://www.ruthfilms.com/films/clusters/did-herzl-really-say-that/israel-our-home.html>

Stalin's Forgotten Zion (Rob Hof, 2004)

http://www.go2films.com/film_info.asp?id=85&title=Docs

Ethnicities and Minorities

The Golden Cage (Chana Calderon, 2005)

<http://www.ruthfilms.com/the-golden-cage.html>

Fog (Rafik Halabi, 2008)

<http://www.ruthfilms.com/catalogsearch/result/?q=fog&x=21&y=9>

Lady Kul El Arab (Ibtisam Mara'ana, 2008)

<http://www.ruthfilms.com/films/docs/politics-and-conflict/lady-kul-el-arab.html>

“Did Herzl Really Say That?” *Oh, My Homeland!* (Ido Bahat, 2006)
<http://www.ruthfilms.com/films/clusters/did-herzl-really-say-that/o-my-homeland.html>

Good Morning Israel (Amir Har-Gil, 2005)
http://www.dragomanfilms.com/GMI_ISRAEL60.html

The Film Class (Uri Rosenwaks, 2006)
<http://www.ruthfilms.com/catalogsearch/result/?q=the+film+class&x=0&y=0>

Black over White/ Idan Reichel project (Tomer Heyman, 2008)
<http://www.ruthfilms.com/black-over-white.html>

The Ashkenazim (Dani Dotan and Dalia Mevorach, 2005)
http://www.go2films.com/film_info.asp?id=20&title=Jewish%20Content

Have You Heard About The Panthers? (Nissim Mossek, 2002)
[http://www.israelifilms.co.il/40420/Have You Heard About the Panthers](http://www.israelifilms.co.il/40420/Have+You+Heard+About+the+Panthers)

Yes, Miss Comander (Dan Setton and Itzik Lerner, 2009)
<http://www.israelifilms.co.il/40420/Yes%2D%2DMiss%2DCommander%2D>

Georgia My Love (Noga Gamlieli, 2007)
<http://www.israelifilms.co.il/40420/Georgia-My-Love>

Pickles (Dalit Kimor, 2005)
<http://www.israelifilms.co.il/40420/Pickles>

Desert Brides (Ada Ushpiz, 2008)
http://www.go2films.com/film_info.asp?id=91&title=Docs

My Fantasia (Duki Dror, 2001)
http://www.go2films.com/film_info.asp?id=78&title=Docs

The Wandering Samaritan (Ohad Ufaz, 2005)
http://www.go2films.com/film_info.asp?id=18&title=Docs

History and the Conflict

Blood and Tears (Isidor Rosmarin, 2007)
<http://www.amazon.com/Blood-Tears-Arab-Israeli-Isidore->

Rosmarin/dp/B000P29GJY/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&s=dvd&qid=1256417852&sr=1-1

Voice of Jerusalem (Ofer Naim, 2009)

<http://www.israelifilms.co.il/40420/Voice%2Dof%2DJerusalem>

Jerusalem Day (Jonathan Aroch, 2007)

<http://www.israelifilms.co.il/40420/Jerusalem-Day>

They Were all We Had (Jonathan Paz, 1988)

<http://www.israelifilms.co.il/40420/They--Were--all--We--Had>

Shalom, Jordan (Dov Gil-Har, 2005)

http://www.israelifilms.co.il/40420/Shalom_Jordan

Follow Me: The Story of the Six Day War (Yigael Ephrati, 1968)

http://www.ergomedia.com/IS50_5.HTM

Six Days in June (2008)

<http://www.sifrutake.com/scripts/main.cgi?action=big&product=PDVD212>

The Yom Kippur War (Leo Filer, 1975)

<http://www.jewishvideo.com>

The Conflict as an Intercultural encounter

Channels of Rage (Anat Halachmi, 2003)

<http://www.ruthfilms.com/catalogsearch/result/?q=Channels+of+Rage>

Oriental (Avi Neshet, 2004)

neshetil@netvision.net.il

First Lesson in Peace (Yoram Honig, 2006)

<http://www.ruthfilms.com/catalogsearch/result/?q=first+lesson+in+peace&x=0&y=0>

Knowledge is the Beginning (Paul Smaczny, 2006)

http://www.israelifilms.co.il/40420/Knowledge_is_the_Beginning

Bridge Over the Wadi (Barak and Tomer Haiman, 2006)

http://www.go2films.com/film_info.asp?id=102&title=Docs

Men on the Edge (Macabib Abrahamson, Avner Faingulernt, 2005)

http://www.go2films.com/film_info.asp?id=21&title=Docs

Biographies and Israeli History

Ben Gurion - An Appointment with Destiny (Melville Mark)

http://www.ergomedia.com/IS50_6.HTM

Slaves of the Sword: Rabin, Dayan, Sharon (Paul Jenkins, 2004)

<http://icarusfilms.com/new2004/slav.html>

Sharon (Dror Moreh, 2007)

<http://www.israelifilms.co.il/40420/Sharon>

Yitzhak Rabin - A Biography (Ben Shani, 2004)

http://www.israelifilms.co.il/40420/Yitzhak_Rabin_-_A_Biography

Begin: From Brisek to Jerusalem (hanan Azran, 2009)

<http://www.sifrutake.com/scripts/main.cgi?action=big&product=PDVD306>

Citizen Aloni (Anat Saragusti, 2008)

http://www.israelifilms.co.il/site/detail/detail/detailDetail.asp?detail_id=1170693&seaWordPage=citizen+aloni

Israel: A cultural Geography

Jerusalem

“Did Herzl Really Say That?” And If I Forget Thee... (Ido Bahat, 2006)

<http://www.ruthfilms.com/films/clusters/did-herzl-really-say-that/and-if-i-forget-thee.html>

Voice of Jerusalem (Ofer Naim, 2009)

<http://www.israelifilms.co.il/40420/Voice%2Dof%2DJerusalem>

Jerusalem Day (Jonathan Aroch, 2007)

<http://www.israelifilms.co.il/40420/Jerusalem-Day>

Jerusalem Right - Tel Aviv Left (Alon Sharvit, 2006)

<http://www.israelifilms.co.il/40420/Jerusalem-Right---Tel-Aviv-Left>

On the Front Line (Hanoach Zeevi, 2001)

<http://www.ruthfilms.com/catalogsearch/result/?q=on+the+front+line&x=0&y=0>

Tel Aviv

Etz O Palestine (Nathan Axelrod, Yoel Zilberg, Uri Zohar, 1962)

<http://www.israelifilms.co.il/40420/Etz-O-Palestine>

Tel Aviv Jaffa parts I & II (Anat Zeltzer and Modi Baron, 2009)

<http://www.israelifilms.co.il/40420/Tel%2DAviv%2D%2D%2DJaffa>

Out for Love, Be Back Shortly (Dan Kazir, 1997)

http://www.newlovetfilms.com/film_detail.php?recordID=2

Another Land (Amit Goren, 1998)

<http://www.ruthfilms.com/films/clusters/amit-goren-trilogy/another-land.html>

Dear Edmond (Amit Goren, 2006)

<http://www.ruthfilms.com/films/clusters/amit-goren-trilogy/dear-edmond.html>

The Kibbutz: Idea, History, Culture

Children of the Sun (Ran Tal and Ron Goldman, 2007)

<http://www.ruthfilms.com/films/docs/israeli-mosaic/children-of-the-sun.html>

The Volunteers (Molly Landseman, 2009)

<http://www.ruthfilms.com/films/docs/israeli-mosaic/the-volunteers.html>

“Did Hertzl Really Say That?” *The World of Yesterday* (Ido Bahat, 2007)

<http://www.ruthfilms.com/films/clusters/did-herzl-really-say-that/the-world-of-yesterday.html>

Degania (Itzhak Rubin, 2008)

<http://www.israelifilms.co.il/40420/Degania>

Eight Twenty Eight (Lavi Ben Gal, 2007)

http://www.go2films.com/film_info.asp?id=61&title=Docs

The Disengagement from Gaza

10 Days in Gaza (Dov Gil-Har, 2005)

http://www.israelifilms.co.il/40420/10_Days_in_Gaza

Storm of Emotion (Yael Klopmann, 2006)

<http://www.ruthfilms.com/catalogsearch/result/?q=storm+of+emotion&x=0&y=0>

And Behold, There Came a Great Wind (Ziv Alexandrony, 2006)

http://www.go2films.com/film_info.asp?id=28&title=Docs

Israeli Culture: Origins, Resources and Traits

Go in Peace Rain (Reuven Hecker, 2007)

<http://www.ruthfilms.com/films/docs/jewish/go-in-peace-rain.html>

Ladino - 500 years Young (Rina Papish, 2005)

<http://www.israelifilms.co.il/40420/Ladino - 500 Years Young>

The Ashkenazim (Dani Dotan and Dalia Mevorach, 2005)

http://www.go2films.com/film_info.asp?id=20&title=Jewish%20Content

Sefarad - Ways and Life (Documentary Series, Jack Matitiah, 2008)

<http://www.ruthfilms.com/films/clusters/sefarad.html>

It's About Time (Ayelet Menahemi, Eilona Ariel, 2001)

<http://www.dragomanfilms.com/iat.html>

Negotiations of Israeli History and the Holocaust

Displaced: The Bad Boys of Exodus (Yael Kipper Zaretzky, 2008)

http://www.go2films.com/film_info.asp?id=100&title=

Le Grand Akshan (Ron Goldamn, 2003)

<http://www.ruthfilms.com/catalogsearch/result/?q=le+grand+akshan&x=22&y=5>

Watermarks (Yaron Zilberman, 2004)

<http://www.kino.com/watermarks/>

Code name: Bayonet (Ron Maiberg, 2006)

<http://www.dragomanfilms.com/cnb.html>

Ponar (Racheli Schwatz, 2002)

<http://www.israelifilms.co.il/40420/Ponar>

Daddy come to the Fair (Nitza Gonen, 1996)

<http://www.israelifilms.co.il/40420/Daddy-Come-to-the-Fair>

Out of the Forest (Limor Pinchasov and Yaron Kaftori, 2004)

<http://www.israelifilms.co.il/40420/Out Of The Forest>

The Children of Teheran (Yehuda Kaveh, David Tour, Dalia Guttman, 2007)
http://www.israelifilms.co.il/40420/The_Children_of_Teheran

The Bunker (Nitza Gonen, 2002)
<http://www.israelifilms.co.il/40420/The-Bunker>

Israelis and Terrorism

Open Eye - Open I (Ohad Ufaz and Shirley Barenholz, 2007)
http://www.go2films.com/film_info.asp?id=51&title=Docs

Number 17 (David Ofek, 2003)
<http://www.edenproductions.co.il/detailProduction.asp?pID=18&fromPage=productions>

ZAKA (Noam Shalev, 2004)
http://www.israelifilms.co.il/40420/ZAKA_Living_With_Death

Jenin Diary (Gil Mezuman, 2002)
<http://www.israelifilms.co.il/40>

Out for Love, Be Back Shortly (Dan Kazir, 1997)
http://www.newlovefilms.com/film_detail.php?recordID=2

Another Land (Amit Goren, 1998)
<http://www.ruthfilms.com/films/clusters/amit-goren-trilogy/another-land.html>

Code name: Bayonet (Ron Maiberg, 2006)
<http://www.dragomanfilms.com/cnb.html>

To Die in Jerusalem (Hilla Medalia, 2007)
<http://www.dragomanfilms.com/tdij.html>

Dubak - A Palestinian Jew (Ella Alterman, 2008)
<http://www.ruthfilms.com/films/docs/israeli-mosaic/dubak-a-palestinian-jew.html>

Footsteps in the Sand (Revital Shtern, 2006)
http://www.go2films.com/film_info.asp?id=71&title=Docs

Feature films contextualized in Israeli history

Pioneers

They Were Ten (Baruch Dinar, 1960)

Unsettled Land (Uri Barbash, 1987)

1940s:

Crossfire (Gideon Ganani, 1988)

Exodus (Otto Preminger, 1960)

Hill 24 Doesn't answer (Thorold Dickinson, 1954)

The House on Sheloush Street (Moshe Mizrahi, 1973)

Rage and Glory (Avi Nesher, 1985)

1950s:

Noa at Seventeen (Yitzhak Yeshurun, 1980)

The Summer of Aviya (Eli Cohen, 1988)

The Woden Gun (Ilan Moshenzon, 1979)

1960s:

Every Bastard is a King (Uri Zohar, 1968)

Late Summer Blues (Renen Schorr, 1987)

Over the Ocean (Yaacov Goldwasser, 1991)

Turn Left at the End of the World (Avi Nesher, 2004)

1970s:

Matching Sights (Eyal Halfon, 2003)

Operation Thunderbolt (Menachem Golan, 1977)

Three Mothers (Dina Tzvi-Riklis, 2004)

1980s:

Campfire (Joseph Cedar, 2003)

Cup Final (Eran Riklis, 1991)

1990s:

Yana's Friends (Arik Kaplun, 1998),

Siren's Song (Eitan Fox, 1994)

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