

David M. Buyze – Online Class, Winter Session, January 2012
The University of Vermont
Global & Regional Studies

Israel/Palestine & Resistances: Politics, Psychoanalysis, and Literature

If fiction plays a key role in what follows it is also for another reason: its powers to unsettle, like psychoanalysis, all idealised, official, rhetorics, whether of nationhood, race, religion or state – its powers of resistance, as one might say.

Jacqueline Rose – [The Last Resistance](#)

This course situates a global and regional contemplation of Israel and Palestine through the contrapuntal reading of discourses of politics, psychoanalysis, and literature. Psychoanalytic readings and literature will be interpreted as modalities of resistance to public political policies/strategies and forms of mass psychology that always seem to reside at a lack of meaning. The course readings will also enable spaces to analyze and think through resistances to the Other in regard to Israelis and Palestinians in reconsiderations of human identity that will also necessitate explorations of resistances to different ideas and ideologies. Our frame of analysis will continually shift from a closer regional lens of study in Israel/Palestine and outward to the global stage in resonating on such issues as displacement, exile, identity, language, postcolonialism, nationalism, gender, and human meaning.

In the first week of our course, we will focus on building our theoretical framework through David Grossman, Edward W. Said, and secondary readings from Jacqueline Rose, Orhan Pamuk, and Sammy Smootha. David Grossman's short collection of essays *Writing in the Dark: Essays on Literature & Politics* provides us with a theoretical lens by which to pressure language and how it is constructed in the public national sphere as compared to a re-thinking of consciousness through literature and private/intimate discourses and reflection. Grossman's collection will be read alongside selections from Jacqueline Rose's *The Last Resistance* which focuses on the power of psychoanalysis and literature as discourses of resistance to nationalism. Edward Said's *Freud and the Non-European* provides us a dynamic theoretical platform by which to extend Rose's perspective in reconsideration of Israeli and Palestinian identities, the designation of the Middle East, and thinking through East/West paradigms. Said's analysis will further allow for a reconsideration of postulations of national identity, through his idea of the irresolution of identity which situates a different understanding of the commonality of culture in Israel/Palestine. As a mode of comparative reading, Said's essay will be read alongside Orhan Pamuk's brief chapter on religion in his memoir *Istanbul: Memories and the City*, and Sammy Smootha's article "Is Israel Western?" Both of these readings allow further manners to pressure understandings of East/West in global and regional manners.

In the second week of our course, we will shift our focus to the literature by Ronit Matalon and Mourid Barghouti that expresses perspectives which continually sway from regional views and dynamics of nationalism in Israel/Palestine to ruminations that figure on the global themes of loss, home, displacement, exile, and identity. From a Palestinian perspective, Barghouti's memoir *I Saw Ramallah* reverberates deeply on these themes in providing a very intimate exploration of human meaning that is exemplary of Grossman's figurations on language. From an Israeli perspective, Matalon's highly personal novel *The One Facing Us: A Novel* shifts across continents in distinct contemplation of the same global themes and other postcolonial and national issues, that are situated both before and after the foundation of the state of Israel, in addition to this novel providing further ways to understand Said's sense of the irresolution of identity. This course will forge varied regional perspectives on Israel/Palestine, and create distinct ways of reflecting on human meaning in a global manner.

This is a two-week course and our reading schedule will be very intensive. In this regard, the major component of our course is the discussion board which is outlined in the syllabus under communication expectations and policies. The full details of your assignments and responsibilities for the discussion board are contained in the course schedule.

Next steps:

1. Order the books for this course so that you have them before the start date of the course. It will also be necessary to read the short books by David Grossman and Edward W. Said before our course start date. You will have access to my introductory lectures on Grossman and Said in Blackboard in the week before the start date of the course.
2. Carefully read and study the course syllabus and go over the course schedule.
3. Click on "Academic Integrity and Copyright Policies" and answer the two questions. This link is at the bottom of the syllabus page.
4. This course will begin immediately and proceed at a rapid pace, so you need to be very aware and on top of each day's assignment(s). Begin the work by clicking on the first week's folder in "Assignments."
5. Finally, please go to the Discussion Board and introduce yourself in the forum titled "Introductions." Tell us a little about yourselves and why you're interested in taking this course.

Required Texts:

1. David Grossman – *Writing in the Dark: Essays on Literature & Politics*
2. Edward Said – *Freud and the Non-European*
3. Ronit Matalon – *The One Facing Us: A Novel*
4. Mourid Barghouti – *I Saw Ramallah*

Required Essays (These will be available on Blackboard):

1. Jacqueline Rose, 'Preface,' 'Introduction,' 'The Last Resistance,' 'Mass Psychology,' in *The Last Resistance*
2. Orhan Pamuk, 'Religion' in *Istanbul: Memories and the City*.
3. Sammy Smooha, "Is Israel Western?," in *Comparing Modernities: pluralism versus homogeneity; Essays in Homage to Shmuel N. Eisenstadt*.

Faculty Contact Information

Please feel free to contact me at anytime vis-à-vis email through Blackboard. The turn-around time for responding to emails and questions posted by you on the discussion board is 24 hours or most usually less than that. If necessary, we can also set up via email a time to talk by telephone.

Learning Objectives

- Maintain a self-critical and global awareness throughout the class.
- Establishing clear relations between the comparative readings of texts and perspectives on Palestine/Israel.
- Critical thinking, reflection, commentaries, and explication of theories and ideas.
- To be able to do close reading, textual analysis, and interpretation of texts.

- Be able to argue and disclose your assessment about the content.
- To write private journal entries that are indicative of a further degree of high engagement with the texts.

I encourage my students to become critical readers, thinkers, and writers; my goal is always not only to promote their intellectual engagement with cultural texts of all kinds but also to help them become more discerning readers and forceful writers about the world around them.

Communication expectations and policies:

- Four weekly posts in response to two different questions that I will pose for a threaded discussion on the discussion board. I will pose questions every week that are directly related to that week's reading. The questions that I pose refer specifically to the text and they are also quite open in order to allow for a greater sense of flexibility from the approach of your own individual thought. These posts are to be a minimum of 250 words per post. I will regularly respond to your posts so that we can work together in developing the quality of your critical interpretation of the readings.
- Pose at least four carefully considered questions in response to four different student posts per week. Your questions should be very specific as to what you are asking or critiquing in regard to another's post and also as to what further points of elucidation or clarification you are situating in your questions.
- Respond with at least four critically well-thought critical commentaries to four different posts or questions per week. In your commentaries, it should go without saying that we are looking for something a lot more substantial than simply stating your agreement or disagreement. Your critical commentaries do not need to ask any questions, but rather they are vehicle for you: to further develop a point or argument about a text that someone else began, to reiterate in your own use of language what someone else is trying to articulate, and this is also a space to make a case against someone's argument or position with supporting evidence from the text.
- Weekly 400 word (minimum) private journal entries. This is explained in further detail below.

Private Journal Entries

On every Friday you will be required to submit a minimum 400 word private journal entry.

The focus of this assignment is to provide a more personal reflection on the week's reading in a private space. This exercise is a way to illuminate your personal reflections in manner that gives you a lot more freedom, and I encourage you to write these journal entries with both emotional and intellectual candor. Only I will be able to access these journal entries, and I will also pose my comments on a weekly basis. These journal entries are important because they can further situate a more finessed and personal degree of engagement with the texts, where you do not feel the pressure of how others will respond.

Course Etiquette

Since the theme of this course is focused on Israel/Palestine, I ask that everyone be very respectful of each other's perspective and stance on the issues. Indeed, the importance of our study is to open our perspectives beyond the propensity to think that one has to have a rigid stance as to where one stands. Be very conscious that you stay focused on the text itself in your discussions and that what you are stating is not just wild conjecture or personal opinion.

Disagreement about interpretations of the text are of course expected, but be sure you are able to support your argument with evidence from the reading. I will of course be monitoring the discussion on a daily basis and I may choose to intervene if I sense that a discussion is not proceeding in a polite and congenial manner.

Grading Policy

100% of your grade will be based on:

- Your independence in how you establish the strength of your presence in the discussion board, and your contribution to creating a dynamic classroom community.
- Your particular use of language in posts, comments, and questions, and how this is indicative and reflective of your skills of textual interpretation and critical thought in establishing clear relations between the readings of texts and perspectives on Israel/Palestine.
- Your abilities of textual analysis in how you assess and address the readings in critical discussion and argument with your colleagues.
- The caliber and degree of reflection in your weekly private journal entries.

I will of course be continually evaluating the quality of your posts, comments, questions, journal entries and offering feedback and critique to help in the overall progress of your performance. You need to be very aware of how you can improve what might be lacking in your work.

At the end of the first week, I will give individual feedback regarding your performance in that week. In subsequent weeks, I will do this when I see fit, and it is also your responsibility to contact me in regard to your own concerns about your work and performance.

Here is basic criteria that I will look for in assessing your grades for the course:

* Excellent (A): leads in participation and discussion; always submits posts, commentaries, questions, and private journal entries on time, sometimes exceeding required number; work is highly critically focused and offers insightful understanding of material; always refers specifically to the text to support ideas; regularly suggests other perspectives/directions; work is always clear, organized, and well-written

* Good (B): always submits posts, commentaries, questions, and private journal entries on time; work shows a good understanding of text; often refers specifically to the text to support ideas; sometimes suggests other perspectives/directions; work is usually well-written

* Fair (C): misses some deadlines, but posts, commentaries, questions, and private journal entries show a basic understanding of the material; occasionally refers specifically to the text to support ideas; work is understandable but may lose focus and writing could be improved

* Poor (D): chronically misses deadlines; posts, commentaries, questions, and private journal entries show limited understanding of the material with few references to texts for support; work is difficult to understand, frequently wanders off-topic, and/or shows significant writing problems

* Failing (F): doesn't participate and rarely submits work