Longing and Belonging: Literatures of Israel  English 398 and Jewish Studies 398
Dr. Holli Levitsky/Loyola Marymount University/Spring 2013
Office: 3863 University Hall, Hours M 1-4 and by appt. (310.338.7664; hlevitsk@lmu.edu)

Course Description and Objectives: In this course, we will investigate modern representations in literature and film of longing for the land of Israel while challenging beliefs about belonging in the land of Israel. For whom is this land the object of longing, and why? Who feels a sense of ownership, or belonging, in the land? Does the feeling of belonging necessarily create an excluded other? How does the longing/belonging dichotomy operate among diasporic writers? Can one feel a belonging for the land while living outside of it, or conversely, can one live in a land and still long for it (or an idealized or imaginary other)? We will neither solve nor resolve the real-life issues imaginatively realized by these writers and filmmakers. Rather, we will complicate the issues by supplanting a single point of view with a multiplicity of views. Our focus will be on how these issues are presented, not whether someone is right or wrong. That said, we will pay close attention to what these representations—or stories—can tell us about the people narrating them as well as the history and geopolitical possibilities inherent in a future. The themes we will pursue include the Zionist dream, immigration and emigration, displacement, contact between cultures, agency or self-government, the absurdity of life in Israel, the diaspora, among others. We will be investigating these themes through the genres of fiction, poetry, memoir and film.

Prerequisites: Undergraduate with upper division standing or Jewish Studies minor or Graduate Student (petition required). Satisfies Comparative Literature or English Literature elective requirement for the English major and the Arts requirement for Jewish Studies minors. As a discussion-based course, students are required to participate energetically, to show an open heart, a generous spirit, and mutual respect at all times. Several of the required films will need to be viewed on your own.

Assignments:
#1. 1st essay: 500-750 words. After watching the film, Exodus, what role did the Holocaust play in creating the modern state of Israel? (due January 28 in class) (10%)
#2. 2nd essay: 750-1000 words. Choose a theme in Amos Oz’s Tale of Love and Darkness and develop it into an analysis. This may develop out of your presentation on the book. (due March 11 in class) (15%)
#3. Presentation on Oz’s Tale of Love and Darkness (15-20 minutes with partner, individual grade, date to be assigned- February 4, 11, 25, March 11, 18) (10%)
#4. 3rd essay: 1000-1500 words. Comparison/contrast analysis on the theme of “Longing.” Choose two of the following writers, and select a work from each one. How does the author suggest the idea of “longing for the land”? Eshkol Nevo, Ghassan Kanafani, Meir Shalev, S. Yizhar, Shmuel Agnon, David Grossman, Mahmoud Darwish, Amos Oz (other than the course texts), A.B.Yehoshua, Etgar Keret, Yehuda Amichai, Hayyim Nahman Bialek, Ravikovitch, Tchernickovskiy, Abu Salma, Abd al-Rahim Mahmud, or other Israeli/Palestinian author/s of your choice. Topic must be approved by me in advance. (due April 29th in class) (25%)
#5. Presentation (“teaching”) your 3rd essay topic (10-15 minutes, April 1st, 15th, 22nd—to be assigned) (10%)
#6. Final Examination (in class essay) Monday May 6th, 4:30-6:30 pm. (20%)
#6. Class attendance, participation and in-class writing (10%)

Reading List:
Required texts, available at LMU University Bookstore, are Amos Oz, *Tale of Love and Darkness*; Sari Nusseibeh, *Once Upon a Country: A Palestinian Life*; A.B. Yehoshua, *A Woman in Jerusalem*. There will also be a number of handouts distributed in class, and reserved readings and films on ER es (password: israelilit).

**Weekly Schedule:**

**January 21: No class.** Martin Luther King holiday. Please view the film, *Exodus*.

**February 18: No class** (conference). Please view Film, *Wedding in Galilee* (on reserve) and bring to class an (informal) reflection discussing the filmmaker’s attitude toward the Arabs, the Israeli soldiers, and the political situation. What aspects of the film lead you the conclusions you make?
2/25: Oz, TLD presentation. Discussion of *Wedding in Galilee*. Nusseibeh *Once Upon a Country*, chapters 8-16

**March 4: No class.** Spring break.
3/11: 2nd essay due. Oz, TLD presentation. Ghassan Kanafani, “Returning to Haifa” and S. Yizhar, from *Khirbet Khizeh* (handout); Mahmoud Darwish, from “In the Presence of Absence” (handout)
3/18: Other Israelis. Oz, TLD presentation. Films: *Yellow Asphalt* and *Voices from El Sayid
3/25: No class. First night of Passover. Please view Divine Intervention (on reserve)
4/1: Teaching presentations. Poetry of the Middle East. Bialik, Ravikovich, Tchernickhovsky, Abu Salma, Abd al-Rahim Mahmud, Zakaria Mohammad, Yehuda Amichai. Film: *The Five Houses of Lea Goldberg*

**4/8: No class.** Western Jewish Studies Association conference at LMU. **SESSION ON SUNDAY APRIL 7th 6:30pm “Children Without a Shadow,” REQUIRED ATTENDANCE INSTEAD OF CLASS.**
4/15: Contact between cultures. Teaching presentations. Film: *The Band’s Visit*
4/22: Teaching presentations. Film: *The Lemon Tree.*
4/29: Russian immigration. 3rd essay due. A. B. Yehoshua’s *A Woman in Jerusalem*. Film, *The Human Resources Manager*

May 6th: Final examination.

*Seek peace and pursue it.* Psalm 34:14

This document may be modified at any time by the instructor. Please pay careful attention to all requirements and any changes.

**Selected Bibliography**


**Grading**

Written assignments require a strong, assertive thesis, textual evidence, and critical analysis that explain the way in which the evidence supports the thesis. Each assignment is assessed at the level of its mechanics as well as its conceptual assertion and development. In both cases essays and other assignments are graded with the following criteria: coherence, critical thinking, clarity and creativity. Although I do not grade competitively, I do grade comparatively in relation to your peers and to your previous work. The following are general descriptions of how I assign letter grades:

- **F (0%-59%)**: A submission that receives an “F” does not fulfill one or more components of the assignment or it is submitted more than two days late.

- **D (60%-69%)**: A submission that receives a “D” attempts to fulfill the assignment, but does not satisfy them. Generally, a “D” lacks effort and/or engagement on the part of the student.

- **C (70%-79%)**: A submission that receives a “C” adequately fulfills the assignment. It reveals little engagement beyond the minimum required to fulfill the assignment, or it is written with minimal care. A “C” grade also may signify that the submission is insufficiently proofread.

- **B (80%-89%)**: Submission fulfills assignments and demonstrates a moderate degree of engagement. The thesis is original, analytical, and demonstrates the student’s engagement with course readings and class discussions. There are no or few typos, sentences are coherent, and the paragraphs flow logically.

- **A (90%-100%)**: A submission that receives an “A” does considerably more than fulfill the assignment. Such a submission demonstrates a high degree of effort and engagement. It also reveals, through clear writing, an assertive thesis that is thoroughly explained. The thesis demonstrates creativity as well as critical analysis. There are no typos and writing is smooth.