Minorities and Others in Israeli Literature and Culture

This course aims to explore questions of identity and visibility within modern Hebrew literature and film. By reading both canonical and minority texts written in the last one hundred years, the course will examine various presentations of Otherness and marginality in the Israeli context. The course will examine the juxtaposition of center and marginality by concentrating on texts and themes that were overshadowed by different aspects of the hegemony. Thus, it will focus on the writings of women, gay, and Mizrahi Jews, and on themes such as disability, gender, power, prostitution, madness, and orphanhood.

A major interest in the course will be the politics of exclusion and inclusion. Since values and interests of the hegemonic canonizer establish the canon, the motivation to study non-canonical writings expresses the dual wish to both expand the canon’s boundaries and to challenges the hegemonic standards that shape it. In this endeavor, the course will highlight the ways in which literature enables silenced voices to express their particular viewpoint and to be discerned and heard.

Through its poetic language, literature reveals uncommon ways of understanding and raises the readers’ consciousness, allowing them to become familiar with the Other, despite bias and cultural differences. In order to expose the various ways in which minority literature articulates these unique experiences, the course will offer various reading strategies—such as close reading, feminist theories, disability studies, and psychoanalysis—to analyze the movies, novels, stories, and poems that we will discuss. Furthermore, in addition to the exploration of language, poetics, ideas, and ideology in the texts, we will locate them in a wider socio-cultural context. We will also integrate Israeli films, music, and art in the literary discussion for a profound understanding of Israeli culture and its approach to the Others within it.

* The vast majority of readings may be found on LATTE.

Course Requirements
Attendence and participation are particularly important and will count as part of the course grade. Students are expected to prepare for each class, participate in class discussion and hand in written assignments in a timely manner.

The final grade will be calculated as follows:
Attendance, participation, and oral presentation – 20%
Midterm paper – 40%
Final paper – 40%
Success in this 4 credit hour course is based on the expectation that students will spend a minimum of 9 hours of study time per week in preparation for class (readings, papers, discussion sections, preparation for exams, etc.).

Others: Within Text, Outside Context – Introduction
- The Israeli Declaration of Independence (1948)

“The Second Israel:” Arab Jews in Israel
- Lena Chaplin (director): “Second Israel,” Tkuma: Israel's First Fifty Years (1999)
- Ella Shohat: “The Invention of the Mizrahim” (1999)
- Erez Biton: “Zohara Alfasia’s Poem”
- Roni Someck: “Handcuff. A Street Poem,” “Poverty”
  - Shlomo Bar: “Children Are Happiness”
- Ronit Matalon: “My Father at Seventy-Nine” (2001)
  - Shmuel Hasfari (director): Shchur (1994)

Holocaust Survivors
- Shahar Rozen (director): “Liebe Perla” (Dear Perla) (1999) [Documentary]

Disability and the Zionist Body
- Joseph Ḥayyim Brenner: “Nerves” (1911)
  - Motti Mizrachi: "Via Dolorosa” (1973)

Crip Futurities
- 39 Pounds of Love (2005), directed by Dani Menkin and Ami Ankilewitz
  - Alison Kafer: selection from Feminist, Queer, Crip (2013)

Prostitution: Gender, Myths, and Experiences
- E. J. Bellocq
- Gershon Shofman: “Henya” (1908)
Raz Yosef: “Recycled Wounds: Trauma, Gender, and Ethnicity in Or, My Treasure,” The Politics of Loss and Trauma in Contemporary Israeli Cinema (2011)

Self, Gaze, and Power
- Botticelli, Titiaan, Ingres, Picasso, Tuluz-Lotrek, and Dali
- John Berger: Ways of Seeing (1972)
- Hayyim Nahman Bialik: “Her Eyes,” “The Hungry Eyes”
- Nathan Alterman: “The Stranger,” “Ancient Melody”
- Esther Raab: “I Under the Thornbush,” “Woman’s Portrait”
- Leah Goldberg: “There are Many Like Me,” “He Will Not Believe”

“Forever Beholden:” Orphanhood
- Shmuel Y. Agnon: “In the Prime of Her Life” (1923)
- Abraham Nicolas and Maria Torok: The Shell and the Kernel: Renewals of Psychoanalysis (1994)

“Unconsciousness Opens like a Fan:” Madness
- Shmuel Y. Agnon: “The Doctor’s Divorce” (1967)
- Dalia Ravikovitch: “Clockwork Doll,” “The Land of the Setting Sun”
- Michel Foucault: selection from History of Madness (1961)
- Shoshana Felman: selection from Writing and Madness (Literature/ Philosophy/ Psychoanalysis) (1985)

Being Palestinian in Israel
  - Arab Labor (Written by Sayed Kashua, Directed by Roni Ninio, 2007) [episode 5 season 1]