

Professor Naomi Sokoloff
University of Washington
Department of Near Eastern Language & Civilization
Phone: 543-7145 FAX 685-7936
E-mail: naosok@u.washington.edu

SYLLABUS
MODERN HEBREW LITERATURE IN ENGLISH TRANSLATION

NE 325/SISJE 490a
3 credits

This survey of modern Hebrew literature and its major developments in the past 100 years includes selections of fiction and poetry by a range of writers from Europe, Israel and the U.S. Among the texts covered are pieces by H.N. Bialik, Dvorah Baron, S.Y. Agnon, Gabriel Preil, Yehuda Amichai, Aharon Appelfeld, Dan Pagis, A.B. Yehoshua, Amos Oz, Etgar Keret, Batya Gur, and more.

This course aims to illuminate some of the factors that make this literature distinctive and fascinating. Hebrew is a language that has been in continuous literary use over millennia. Dramatic historical circumstances and ideological forces fostered the revival of the language as a modern tongue and shaped Hebrew literary endeavors up through current time.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Students are expected to do the required reading, to attend class and to participate in class discussion. There will be several short written assignments, two quizzes and a take-home essay exam. This is a “W” course, which requires significant amounts of writing, editing, and revision. Final grades will be determined as follows:

Assignments:

- #1. A close reading of a poem; 350-750 words (10%)
- #2. A summary of one of the secondary sources in the recommended reading; 350-750 words (10%)
- #3. A short essay; 500-750 words (10%)
- #4. 2 quizzes; one at midterm and one during finals week (20%)
- #5. Take-Home Essays: Three essays (750-1250 words). Questions will be distributed by midterm. Students may opt to write an 8-10 page term paper (2000-2500 words) in

lieu of the take-home essays, but they must propose a topic and receive the instructor's permission before undertaking that option. (40%)

#6 Class participation (10%)

Students will receive feedback on each written assignment and will then rewrite to raise the grade. Students who wish to have their final essays returned to them should provide the instructor with a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

If you would like to request academic accommodations due to a disability, please contact Disabled Student Services, 448 Schmitz, 206-543-8924. If you have a letter from Disabled Student Services indicating you have a disability that requires academic accommodations, please present the letter to the instructor and discuss the accommodations you might need for the class.

Turn off all cell phones during class!!

Be sure to keep a copy of any work you turn in and any work that the instructor returns to you. This is important in case an assignment gets misplaced, in case you wish to discuss a grade, and in case you wish to refer to feedback offered throughout the quarter. Please also keep a copy of this syllabus.

In cases of academic misconduct, such as plagiarism or receiving inappropriate assistance with assignments, offending students will be penalized in accordance with the policy of the College of Arts and Sciences.

Additional Credits: Any student who wishes to earn an additional 2-3 credits for reading some of these texts in the original Hebrew should make arrangements with the instructor.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Modern Hebrew Literature, ed. Robert Alter (Berman House, 1975)

Literary Murder, by Batya Gur (Harper, 1993)

Selected poems and short fiction

Recommended readings

Recommended readings are listed in the syllabus. These readings are useful for bolstering understanding of the primary material and as resources for the writing assignments.

COURSE OUTLINE

WEEK 1. HEBREW LITERATURE: WHAT? WHERE? WHY?

Required Reading: Yehuda Amichai, "National Thoughts"; J.L. Gordon, "For Whom Do I Toil?"; Mendele Mokher Seforim, "Shem and Japheth in the Train" [*Modern Hebrew Literature*, pp. 15-38] and "Burned Out."

Recommended Reading: Benajmin Harshav, *Language in Time of Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993) pp. 81-152; David Patterson, "Moving Centers in Modern Hebrew Literature," in Glenda Abramson and Tudor Parfitt, Eds., *The Great Transition : The Recovery of the Lost Centers of Modern Hebrew Literature* (Rowman & Allenheld, 1985), pp. 1-10; Robert Alter, *The Invention of Hebrew Prose* (University of Washington Press, 1988), pp. 1-42; Hillel Halkin, "Adventures in Translating Mendele," *Prooftexts* 10, 1 (1990): 69-91.

WEEK 2. WRITERS OF THE HEBREW RENAISSANCE

Required Reading: H.N. Bialik, "I Didn't Win Light in a Windfall," "On the Slaughter," "Take Me Under Your Wing"; M.Y. Berdichevsky, "Without Hope," Yizhak Dov Berkowitz, "Cut Off".

Recommended Reading: "Bialik" in *The Modern Hebrew Poem Itself*, ed. Ezra Spicehandler, et al, pp. 197-202 and 18-34; David Roskies, *The Literature of Destruction* (JPS, 1988), pp. 145-168; Ahad Ha'am, "Imitation and Assimilation" [in *Modern Hebrew Literature*, pp. 87-101]; Shimon Halkin, *Modern Hebrew Literature* (Schocken, 1950), pp. 54-99.

WEEK 3. TRANSITIONS.

Required Reading: Y.H. Brenner, "The Way Out," [in *Modern Hebrew Literature*, pp. 141-161] and "Travel Notes;" Dvorah Baron, "Sunbeams" and "Excision".

Recommended Reading: Alter, *The Invention of Hebrew Prose*, pp. 45-67; Lily Rattok, "Introduction: The Other Voice" in Carol Diamant and Lily Rattok, *Ribcage* (Hadassah, 1994), pp. xvi-xxxiv; Anita Norich, "Jewish Literatures and Feminist Criticism" in Naomi Sokoloff, Anne Lapidus Lerner & Anita Norich eds., *Gender and Text in Modern Hebrew and Yiddish Literature* (JTSA, 1992), pp. 1-15;. Glenda Abramson, "No Way out: Brenner and the War," *AJS Review* 27,1 (2003) pp. 73-84;

Alan Mintz, *“Banished from Their Father’s Table”: Loss of Faith and Hebrew Autobiography*, (Indiana University Press, 1989), pp. 1-24.

WEEK 4: CONTINUITY AND TRADITION: THE ART OF S.Y. AGNON

Required Reading: S.Y. Agnon, “Agunot,” “Forevermore,” “At the Outset of Day,” [in *Modern Hebrew Literature*, pp. 179-249]; “The Sense of Smell”

Recommended Reading: Gershon Shaked, *Shmuel Yosef Agnon: A Revolutionary Traditionalist* (NYU, 1989), pp. 1-45; Alan Mintz and Anne Golomb Hoffman, *A Book That Was Lost* (Schocken, 1995), pp. 3-29; Baruch Hochman, *The Fiction of S.Y. Agnon* (Cornell UP, 1970), pp. 158-184.

WEEK 5. HEBREW IN AMERICA.

Required Reading: Gabriel Preil, “Chapters of Time: His and Mine”; “My Country’s Orbit”; “Prescription: Studying a Dictionary, Hunting a Poem”; Yoram Kolerstein, “Idolatry”

Recommended Reading: Yael Feldman, *Modernism and Cultural Transfer* (HUC Press, 1986), pp. 43-54;; Alan Mintz ed. *Hebrew in America* (Wayne State UP, 1993), pp. 13-16.

WEEK 6: PIONEERS, ALIYAH AND THE KIBBUTZ

Required Reading: Hayim Hazzaz, “The Sermon” [in *Modern Hebrew Literature*, pp. 267-287]; Avraham Shlonsky, “Toil”; Rachel, “To My Country,” “Was It Only a Dream”; Aharon Megged, “Tears” [in *The Oxford Book*, pp. 139-146]; Savyon Liebrecht, “Apples from the Desert”

Recommended Reading: Amos Elon, *The Israelis: Founders and Sons* (Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1971), pp. 139-193; Robert Friend and Shimon Sandbank, Introduction to *Flowers of Perhaps: Selected Poems of Ra’hel* (Menard Press, 1995), pp. 1-5; “Rachel and the Female Voice: Labor, Gender and the Zionist Pioneer Vision,” in William Cutter and David C. Jacobson, *History and Literature* (Brown Judaic Studies, 2002), pp. 303-318.

WEEK 7: INDEPENDENCE AND THE ARAB/ISRAELI CONFLICT

Required Reading: Natan Alterman, “The Silver Platter”; S. Yizhar, “The Prisoner” [in *Modern Hebrew Literature*, pp. 191-310]; Haim Heffer, “The Paratroopers are Weeping”; Yehuda Amichai, “The Diameter of the Bomb; When I was Young the Whole Country was Young”; Dalia Ravikovitch, “Hovering at a Low Altitude;” Etgar Keret, “Cocked and Locked.”

Recommended Reading: Esther Raizen, *No Rattling of Sabers* (1995); Amos Elon: *The Israelis: Founders and Sons*, pp. 334-365; Howard Sachar: *The Course of Modern Jewish History* (Dell, 1958), pp. 261-283; 369-393; Barbara Mann, Nili Scharf Gold, and Chana Kronfeld on “Hovering at a Low Altitude” in Alan Mintz, ed. *Reading Hebrew Literature* (Brandeis UP, 2003), pp. 213-245; Donna Rosenthal, *The Israelis*, pp. 7-22.

WEEK 8: RESPONSES TO THE HOLOCAUST

Required Reading: Aharon Appelfeld, “Cold Spring;” Yehuda Amichai, “The Times My Father Died” [in *Modern Hebrew Literature*, pp. 313-325]; Dan Pagis, “Sealed Car”; Etgar Keret, “Shoes.”

Recommended Reading: Alan Mintz, *Hurban: Responses to Catastrophe in Hebrew Literature* (Columbia University Press, 1984), pp. 203-269; Sidra Ezrahi, “Dan Pagis -- Out of Line. A Poetics of Decomposition,” *Prooftexts* 10 (1990), pp. 335-363; Gershon Shaked, Afterword to Gila Ramras-Rauch, *Facing the Holocaust*; Tom Segev, *The Seventh Million* (Hill and Wang, 1993), pp. 3-11, 323-366, 509-517 [Prologue, Eichmann in Jerusalem, Epilogue].

WEEK 9: DIVERSE COMMUNITIES

Film: “Sallah”

Required Reading: Ephraim Kishon, “Absorbing Immigrants”

Recommended Reading: Ella Shohat, *Israeli Cinema*; (University of Texas Press, 1989), pp. 138-155; Peter Hirschberg, “Israel’s Ethnic Underclass,” *The Jerusalem Report* June 12, 1997, pp. 12-18; Nancy Berg, *Exile from Exile: Israeli Writers from Iraq* (SUNY, 1996), pp. 139-156; Donna Rosenthal. *The Israelis*, pp. 113-129.

WEEK 10: POPULAR FICTION

Required Reading: Batya Gur, *Literary Murder*. Natan Zach, “Samson’s Hair”

Recommended Reading: Nancy Berg, "Oleh Hadash (new immigrant): the case of the Israeli mystery," *Edebiyat* 5,2 (1994): pp. 279-290.