

**The Hebrew University of Jerusalem,
Rothberg International School,
Division of Undergraduate Studies**

48624: Israeli Narratives of War and Peace

Course Description: This course will explore the way Israeli literature of war, violence and reconciliation—both fiction and non-fiction—opens a crucial window in understanding issues at the heart of the Israeli experience. War and the national ethos of military service has both shaped the cultural discussion of Israel since its founding, and is also the subject of that same culture. Attitudes to war and conflict are not simply the stuff of political or ideological debate; rather, they are a formative marker of identity, of what it means to be an Israeli. We will examine how this writing addresses the central paradoxes of contemporary Israel, of the demarcation between the powerless Jew of the exilic past vs. the confident and empowered Israeli future. Writing about war simultaneously reveals an urgent sense of collective identity, and yet the deep internal fissures in Israeli consciousness. Literature—novels; essays; journalism; memoir; poetry-- about war and conflict thus provides a unique opportunity to understand how Israelis think, argue, struggle, and change.

Assessment

- Course Attendance and Participation - 15%
- First Essay - 35%.
- Final Essay - 50%

Course Outline

Session 1: Introduction. War and Conflict in Short Fiction

Etgar Keret – “The Surprise Egg”

Etgar Keret - “Shoes”

Session 2: Growing Up in the Shadow of War

Amos Oz - A Tale of Love and Darkness (Chapters 41-47)

Session 3: The Search for Home

Meir Shalev - A Pigeon and a Boy

Sessoin 4: The Emotional Price of War

Yehuda Amichai - "Selected Poems"

Session 5: Purim (no class)

Session 6: War and Judaism

Yeshayahu Leibowitz – “The Territories”

Sherri Mandell – Blessings of a Broken Heart

Session 7: Soldiers

Shani Boianjiu – Three stories from The People of Forever are Not Afraid: “Other People’s Children;” “The Sound of All Girls Screaming”; “Means of Suppressing Demonstrations.”

Mati Friedman - Pumpkin Flowers

First Essay Due

Session 8: The Lebanon War on Film

Joseph Cedar – “Beaufort”

Ari Folman – “Waltz with Bashir”

Session 9: Independence Day – No Class

Session 10: Under Siege

Sayed Kashua – Let it Be Morning

Session 11: War and Loss

David Grossman - To the End of the Land

Final Essay Due

Session 12: Final Thoughts