Screening the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict. Competing and Complementary Narratives through Cinematic Representations

ANSO096- Autumn - 6 ECTS

Schedule & Room

Course Description

A consistent body of knowledge about the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been produced by several social science disciplines. However, to date, few attempts have been made to combine that knowledge with the narratives produced on the conflict by films, both fictions and documentaries.

Audio-visual materials related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are ‘constructions’ and interpretations of ‘realities’ at different levels, and constitute an important (memory and documentary) archive which can complement and accompany the work of research in human and social sciences.

This seminar will therefore aim at examining, in a socio-political and historical perspective, the role of film directors –Israeli and Palestinian in particular-as artists and social actors, who contribute to (re)shape national and local narratives, in supporting or challenging official histories and collective memories.

A selection of films produced over a time span of 15 years will be studied: from those related to the Second Intifada (2000-2005) and its immediate aftermath, to those covering the ongoing conflict during the past decade.

Interestingly, the Israeli and Palestinian cinematic narratives produced during these two periods show important aspects of convergence and complementarity in addressing peace and conflict dynamics in both societies. And gendering the approaches of film directors to the chosen movies’ topics will be part and parcel of the overall endeavour.
Since the late 1940s, a number of key events have kept feeding the Israeli and Palestinian official national narratives in order to assert the respective claims to political legitimacy and/or victimhood. On the Israelis’ side, the 1948 War, namely the ‘War of Independence’ fought in the immediate aftermath of the British Mandate, materialized in the creation of the new Jewish State.

On the Palestinians’ side, the same war ushered into a Nakba, i.e. a ‘catastrophe’. Not only they lost 78% of their homeland to the new Israeli State, but the Nakba meant as well a huge population displacement -the beginning of the Palestinian refugees’ plight-, the annexation of the West Bank by Jordan and the Egyptian military administration over the Gaza Strip. By the early 1950s, the very name of Palestine was erased from geographical maps...

Almost 20 years after the Nakba, the second Arab-Israeli conflict in 1967 materialized into the Naksa (i.e. the defeat). Among others, that meant a second refugee flow, and the Israeli military occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, an occupation which has been lasting until today. During the 1970s, the Fedayyin (the Palestinian Freedom Fighters) of the PLO were among the symbols of a new form of ‘international terrorism’ in the Cold War context.

In 2018, the Israelis celebrated the 70th anniversary of their State independence, while the Palestinians have been commemorating seven decades of the Nakba and more than half a century of military occupation on 22% of historic Palestine. The past three right-wing Israeli governments under the premiership of B. Netanyahu have witnessed an increased militarization of the society and the State; a radicalization of discriminatory policies towards the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories, but in Israel as well; the military resistance of Hamas in Gaza has given way to three major wars in the Strip, with a catastrophic outcome for the local population; the fracture inside the Palestinian National Movement is unprecedented and the the horizon for a peaceful settlement to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict seems more gloomy than ever.

During the seminar and in parallel to the reading of a number of texts, we will screen and analyze a selection of films produced over a time span of almost 15 years and related to a number of transversal items from 2005 onwards.

The evolving political contexts of the past decade have contributed to shape, on the one side, the subjectivities of the Jewish filmmakers in Israel and from the diaspora; on the other side, the same contexts have also largely influenced the Palestinian film directors residing in Israel, in the West Bank and Gaza, or from the Palestinian diaspora in the Middle East, Europe and North America.

The filmic narratives produced during the past decade by Jewish (Israeli) and Palestinian film directors are not always conflictive, actually they are often complementary in challenging the political narratives about the past (the ‘official histories’) and the present (the media narratives), put forward by their respective governments. Furthermore, many cinematic representations are instrumental as well to ‘echo or give voice’ to the silenced memories of members of both the Israeli and Palestinian national communities.

The social science literature related to the the ‘Peace Process’, to the ongoing military occupation and their consequences on both societies –on which the student will work- mirrors as well the filmic representations in terms of complementarity of the Israeli and Palestinian narratives.

Finally, and through a bottom-up approach, the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict, its past evolutions, and its present dynamics also allow for reading a larger ‘globalized’ world. A world entangled with crises linked to complex armed conflicts and their humanitarian pitfalls, with new visions of security and surveillance embedded in neoliberal approaches which, among others, have created the bed for increased forms of exclusion, marginalization and poverty.
1. **Organization**

During the Fall 2018, the seminar will take place each Wednesday from 4.15pm to 6.00pm, starting on Thursday, the 19th of September.

Attendance to the sessions of the seminar is compulsory. Students are required to read the compulsory texts and watch the movies before each session.

The seminar is taught primarily in English. Questions and oral presentations, as well as the final papers, may be formulated/written in English or in French.

2. **Sessions of the Seminar with Readings and Films**

The list of the compulsory readings will be available on the support material webpage, and the movies will be accessible on line.

**Part 1 – Cinema, History and Politics**

Session 1 – 19th September

*Introduction to the problematic of the seminar and its sessions*

Readings:


Film:


Résumé: De la fin du XIXe siècle à 1950, l'histoire d'une terre, la Palestine où, en 1948, Israël a été créé, une terre revendiquée par Israéliens et Palestiniens. Un récit historique à partir d'archives rares.

Session 2 – 26th September

*On Memory, History and Conflict through Cinema*

Readings:


ROSENSTONE, Robert, 1995, « The Historical Film as Real History », in : *Film Historia*, vol. 5, n°1, pp. 5-23.

STAMBOLIYSKA, Rayna, “Our Otherness : Imagining Balkan and Mid-Eastern Identities”, in *Open Democracy*,

Films:

*Occupation 101* by Sufyan & Abdallah Omeish, 2006, 90mn.
Synopsis: A thought-provoking documentary film on the current and historical root causes of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, presenting a comprehensive analysis of the facts and hidden truths surrounding the never ending controversy and dispelling many of its long-perceived myths and misconceptions. The film also details life under Israeli military rule, the role of the United States in the conflict, and the major obstacles that stand in the way of a lasting and viable peace. The roots of the conflict are explained through first-hand on-the-ground experiences from leading Middle East scholars, peace activists, journalists, religious leaders and humanitarian workers whose voices have too often been suppressed in American media outlets. The film covers a wide range of topics -- which include -- the first wave of Jewish immigration from Europe in the 1880's, the 1920 tensions, the 1948 war, the 1967 war, the first Intifada of 1987, the Oslo Peace Process, Settlement expansion, the role of the US Government, the second Intifada of 2000, the separation barrier and the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, as well as many heart wrenching testimonials from victims of this tragedy.

Palestine: A People's Record by Kays al Zobaidi, 1984, 110mn.
Synopsis: Explores Palestine in archive footage dating from 1917 to 1974, bringing together valuable rare footage in an historic account of Palestinian nationhood. The archive material is in itself remarkable and al Zobaidi’s knowledgeable editing renders the film an enthralling visual and historical document.

The Oslo Diaries by Mor Loushy and Daniel Sivan, 2018, 97mn.
Synopsis: In 1992, with Israeli-Palestinian relations at an all-time low and any communication between the two sides punishable by jail time, a select group of Israelis and Palestinians gathered secretly in Oslo for a series of clandestine meetings that would dramatically change the political landscape of the Middle East. Chronicling their journey towards peace, The Oslo Diaries features rare, never-before-seen archival footage and diary entries of key negotiators on both sides, providing an inside look at the immense pressure faced by the architects of what came to be known as the Oslo Accords. A comprehensive, dramatic account of the negotiations, this geopolitical story draws on previously unseen footage shot from 1992 to 1995, as well as excerpts from and re-creations based on the negotiators’ diaries, which are the only available accounts of what happened behind closed doors. Many of those involved openly and emotionally recount the political intrigue, fiery rhetoric, unlikely friendships and overwhelming desire for peace at the heart of the negotiations. This illuminating and poignant documentary sheds new light on these secret talks, featuring exclusive interviews, including former Israeli president and foreign minister Shimon Peres in the last recorded interview before his 2016 death. Spotlighting the very human personalities behind this extraordinary peace process, The Oslo Diaries includes interviews with key players on both sides, among them Ron Pundak, Abu Ala, Uri Savir, Hanan Ashrawi, Yossi Beilin, Joel Singer, Daniel Kurtzer, Nabil Shaath, Dennis Ross and Saeb Erekat.

Session 3 – 3rd October (4.15-7.00pm)
How to ‘read’ a documentary
Screening in class of the movie:
The Gatekeepers (Israel Confidential) by Dror Moreh, 2013, 95mn.
Synopsis: For the first time ever, six former heads of the Shin Bet, Israel's secret service agency, agree to share their insights and reflect publicly on their actions and decisions. Intimately interviewed, they shed light on the controversy surrounding the Occupation in the aftermath of the Six Day War. Followed by a lecture by Pierre-André Fink (IHEID) and a debate.

Session 4 – 10th October
On Palestinian cinema(s)
Readings:


Synopsis : “What does it mean to be a Palestinian filmmaker in the context of national struggle?” Cinema Palestine asks how “Palestinian cinema” has been understood by prominent directors. Canadian filmmaker and academic Tim Schwab’s feature-length documentary explores the life and work of several generations of Palestinian filmmakers. Cinema Palestine presents excerpts from signal works alongside in-depth interviews with directors living in the Middle East, Europe, or North America (including Hany Abu-Assad, Azza el-Hassan, Sobhi Zobaidi, Mai Masri, Tawfik Abu Wael, Annemarie Jacir, and many more). Despite their diverse biographical experiences and their varying artistic or political concerns, are these filmmakers expressing a particular ‘national’ cinema?

Gaza 36mm, Khalil Al Mozayen, 2012, 52mn.

Synopsis : In words and images, the film tells the story of cinema in Gaza since the 1940s. Its subjects, including Palestinian directors Arab and Tarzan Nasser, bear witness to the influence of Islamism on the gradual closure of all Gaza cinemas. It is a film not only about cinema in Gaza, but also about Gaza itself, it is an act of resistance against the uniformity imposed by the Islamist regime in power in Gaza.

Session 5 – 17th October (4.15-7.00pm)

On Israeli cinema(s)

Readings:


Films:

Une histoire du cinéma israélien de Raphaël Nadjar, 2009, 209mn. (Hebrew subt. Français)

Résumé : la première partie (1932 - 1978) s’attache au mouvement sioniste et à l’existence même d’un état en perpétuelle quête d’identité et de reconnaissance, la seconde période (1978 - 2007) présente un cinéma plus politique et plus polémique, reflet d’une société civile multiforme et non consensuelle. Le documentaire contient d’innombrables extraits de films et d’entretiens avec d’éménents spécialistes (réalisateurs, auteurs, écrivains, critiques, journalistes...).
**On Israeli and Palestinian Cinema**: 2011 video-conference by Ella SHOHAT and Rasha SALTI
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ikxZ_Yg2u_U&list=PLo50no-cDy3TTusS4U07ZQ9UJQSE34EtZ

Session 6 – 24th October

**Presentation of the topics for students’ papers**

**Readings: compulsory for all the students preparing their oral presentation and written works**


- Chapter 1 – Moving Pictures as a Historical Resource
- Chapter 3 – The Sum of its parts : Understanding the Medium
- Chapter 4 – Assessing a Film’s Historical Account


**PART 2 – THE ROLE AND EVOLUTION OF ‘NATIONAL’ NARRATIVES AND PRACTICES**

Session 7 – 31st October

**Negotiating National Histories**

**Readings:**


**Films:**

**Izkor. Slaves of Memory** by Eyal Sivan, 1990, 97mn.

**Synopsis**: his documentary is a portrait of the Israeli society, thirty days in the life of a state that lives to the rhythm of its memory. “Izkor” means “remember” in Hebrew and this film looks in depth at this imperative that is imposed on the children of Israel. In Israel during the month of April feast days and celebrations take place one after another. School children of all ages prepare to pay tribute to their country's past. The collective memory becomes a terribly efficient tool for the training of young minds. The author of the film is an Israeli. By going to rediscover the myths and symbols that have contributed to the making of his own identity, as well as that of every Israeli, he is bringing into play his own personal experience.

Synopsis: Five decades ago, the three Palestinian villages of ‘Imwas, Yalo and Beit Nouba in the Latroun enclave of the West Bank were razed to the ground after Israel occupied the territory. Today, the residents of those villages remain displaced and barred from returning, while Israel treats the land as if it were part of Israel and refuses to acknowledge the Palestinian history of the area. Israeli citizens enjoy barbecues and picnics in the Jewish National Fund’s “Canada Park”, oblivious to the crimes perpetrated in their names on that very land. Musleh’s documentary traces the buried histories of these Palestinian villages through oral histories, archive film and photography, and expert testimonies.

On the side of the road by Lia Tarachansky, 2013, 83mn.
Synopsis: Former West Bank settler Lia Tarachansky looks at Israelis’ collective amnesia of the fateful events of 1948 when the state of Israel was born and most of the Palestinians became refugees. She follows the transformation of Israeli veterans trying uncover their denial of the war that changed the region forever. Tarachansky then turns the camera on herself and travels back to her settlement where that historical erasure gave birth to a new generation, blind and isolated from its surroundings. Attempting to shed a light on the country’s biggest taboo, she is met with outrage and violence.

Zahra by Mohammad Bakri, 2009, 60mn.
Synopsis: the film director narrates this personal documentary about his aunt Zahra Bakri. Mrs. Bakri grew up in the Palestinian village of Al-Bane in the Galilee. Starting with her childhood, the film takes us on a journey through Palestine’s turbulent history and chronicles the effects of these unfolding events on Zahra’s life. Through her story, we experience the violent events that lead to the establishment of the state of Israel, the effect of life under martial law (1948-1966), and the radical transformation of Palestinian society from a majority to a disenfranchised minority.

Session 8 – 7th November
Rethinking the Past in a Tumultuous Present

Readings:


Films:
Synopsis: Through riveting and moving personal recollections of both Palestinians and Israelis, the film reveals the shocking events of the most pivotal year in the most controversial conflict in the world. It tells the story of the establishment of Israel as seen through the eyes of the people who lived it. It is simply not possible to make sense of what is happening in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict today without an understanding of 1948. This documentary was the last chance for many of its Israeli and Palestinian characters to narrate their first-hand accounts of the creation of a state and the expulsion of a nation.

Censored Voices by Mor Loushy, 2015, 87mn.
Synopsis: the film reveals audio-recorded, intimate conversations with Israeli soldiers fresh from the battlefield after Israel’s victory of 1967’s Six-Day War. These provocative tapes, censored until now, are the core of the film about the tragic paradox of Zionism and the contradictions that arise when a people seeking freedom turn occupier, when David becomes Goliath. As they wrestle with the
systemic excision of Palestinians, the dehumanizing nature of war, and echoes of the Holocaust, we listen as these men, now almost 50 years older, hear the recordings for the first time, and the past erupts, presciently, into the present. As the film director put it: “Censored Voices tells the painful story of the Israeli occupation at the historic moment that it began, it tells the story of men at war who thought they were going to be defending their lives and their family’s lives, and instead come back as conquerors. Because the film is composed of secret conversations that took place only a week after the war it provides a unique glimpse into these men at war. These conversations are revealed in our film for the first time. These voices have never been heard in Israel. They are very radical voices. The Israeli state had censored these conversations, so it also tells the story of fear. We have, as a society, silenced and denied other voices. If only these conversations were to have gone public in the 1960s, maybe the Israeli reality would look different today”.

The Iron Wall, Mohammed Alatar, 2006, 52mn.
Synopsis: In 1923, Vladimir Jabotinsky – father of the Zionist right – wrote: “Zionist colonization… can proceed and develop only under the protection of a power that is independent of the native population – behind an IRON WALL, which the native population cannot breach.” From that day on, these words became the official and unspoken policy of the Zionist movement and, later, the State of Israel. Colonies, often referred to as "settlements,” were used to solidify the Zionist foothold throughout historic Palestine. Following the 1967 occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, more than 200 settlements and outposts have been built in these territories, in violation of international law. The film exposes this phenomenon and follows the timeline, size, and population of the settlements, reveals how their construction has been a cornerstone of Israeli policy, and demonstrates how the Wall secures them as permanent and irreversible facts on the ground. This documentary warns that a contiguous and viable Palestinian state is becoming no longer possible, and that the chances for a peaceful resolution of the conflict are slipping away. The documentary features interviews with prominent Israeli and Palestinian peace activists and political analysts: Jeff Halper, Akiva Eldar, Hind Khoury... Also included are interviews with Israeli settlers and soldiers, and Palestinian farmers.

This is My Land by Tamara Erde, 2013, 89mn.
Synopsis: How do the Palestinian and Israeli (Arab and Jewish) education systems teach the history of their nations? The film follows several Israeli and Palestinian teachers over one academic year. Through observing their exchanges and confrontations with students, debates with the ministries curriculum, and its restrictions, the viewers obtain an intimate glimpse into the profound and long lasting effect that the Israeli/Palestinian conflict transmits onto the next generation. Through intimate portraits of history teachers and close observations of their pupils, the film reveals the different approach of the two public education systems to teach the complex and charged narrative of their country's history. The chosen schools are set in locations that emphasize the changing daily life of the conflict – in Jerusalem, The North of Israel, Nablus, Ramallah and a colony. The film interweaves the stories of the teachers and their classes in parallel, constructing for the viewer the different and sometimes opposing universes of the teachers and their schools.

Session 9 – 14th April
Soldiering the Occupation
Readings:
KUNTSMAN, Adi (2016) "Review: Wrapped in the Flag of Israel: Mizrahi Single Mothers and Bureaucratic Torture”. In: Journal of Middle East Women’s Studies 12(2) pp.264-266.


BREAKING THE SILENCE, Occupying Hebron: Soldiers’ Testimonies from Hebron 2011-2017

Films:

**Foxrot** by Samuel Maoz, 2017, 112mn.

**Synopsis:** Michael and Dafna Feldmann, an affluent Tel Aviv couple, learn that their son, Jonathan, a soldier, has died in the line of duty. The Israeli military authorities refuse to inform the distraught parents where and how Jonathan died, or if his body had been recovered. Several hours later, they are notified almost matter-of-factly that there has been a mix-up, and that it was some other Jonathan Feldman who has been killed. An angry Michael demands that the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) allow Jonathan to return home. The film then follows Jonathan's experiences during his military service as one of four soldiers manning a desolate checkpoint under primitive conditions. Late one night, the soldiers kill a group of four young Palestinians after they mistake a beer can that rolled out of the Palestinians' car for an explosive device. The soldiers arrange for a bulldozer to bury the car with its deceased occupants inside, and are warned by a senior IDF officer not to disclose this. Later, while Jonathan is being driven back to Tel Aviv, the military vehicle in which he is riding on a narrow, rutted desert road swerves to avoid a camel and rolls down an embankment. The final scenes follow Michael, Dafna and Alma, Jonathan's younger sister, six months after his death.

**Soldiers on the Roof** by Esther Hertog, 2012, 80mn.

**Synopsis:** The center of many conflicts between Israelis and Palestinians, Hebron is a major holy place to both Jews and Muslims where some 800 extremist Jewish settlers live in the midst of a Palestinian population of over 120,000. For three years, Esther Hertog filmed from within the settler community, capturing unique scenes of their real, sometimes surreal daily life. A character driven documentary, the essential narrative of 'Soldier on the Roof' depicts the filmmaker's personal quest to understand the realities and motivations of Hebron's settlers.


**Synopsis:** An unprecedented, groundbreaking, and voyeuristic look into military reserve life in Israel, this film was shot over a 5-year period in director and reserve soldier Yaniv Berman's life. A soldier in the Israeli army reserves, Alpha Company, Berman had unparalleled access and filmed the soldiers as they went about their military service, day and night. Crossing over to the Palestinian border, the camera captured remarkably every movement of the soldiers from the frenetic night-time house arrests to the quiet moments of self-reflection and despair. Capturing the humiliation of both the Palestinians who are subject to the house arrests as well as the Israeli soldiers who had to carry them out, this documentary is the unique story of those who, 30 days every year, drop their normal lives and, under the guise of the olive-green uniform, perform the toughest, most unsettling tasks in the heart of an urban Palestinian town. The camera penetrates the steely barriers of the military barracks and gains fresh insight into the views of the soldiers who speak frankly and uncompromisingly on a range of issues including the occupation, the conflict, and the Army. A sensitive exploration of the conflict done firsthand by an individual caught in the midst of the action, Berman's film leaves us with no doubt that war leaves scars and victims on both sides of the camp.

**To See if I Am Smiling** by Tamar Yarom, 2007, 59mn.

**Synopsis:** Six Israeli women give a personal account about their life in the Israeli Army, in the Occupied Territories. A female point of view on the drama of an unending war, on the moral challenges the soldiers faced at the encounter with the Palestinian population. The women look back critically at the way they handled the power that was placed in their hands at the young age of eighteen. Questions that were not dealt with during the service are raised today with great pain.

**Session 10 – 21st November**

**Non-Violent Resistance**

**Readings:**


Films:

5 Broken Cameras, Emad Burnat & Guy Davidi, 2011, 94mn.

Synopsis: Palestinian farm laborer Emad has five video cameras, and each of them tells a different part of the story of his village's resistance to Israeli oppression. Emad lives in Bil'in, just west of the city of Ramallah in the West Bank. Using the first camera, he recorded how the bulldozers came to rip the olive trees out of the ground in 2005. Here, a wall was built directly through his fellow villagers' land to separate the advancing Jewish settlements from the Palestinians. In the first days of resistance to the Jewish settlers and the ever-present Israeli soldiers, Emad's son Gibreel was born. Scenes shift from the infant growing into a precocious preschooler to the many peaceful acts of protest, and the steady progress of the construction of the dividing wall. Sympathizers from all over the world, including from Israel, provide help as resistance develops, but when the situation intensifies, people are arrested and villagers are killed. Emad keeps on filming despite pleas from his wife, who fears reprisals. It makes for an intensely powerful personal document about one village's struggle against violence and oppression.

In the Image: Palestinian Women Capture Occupation by Judith Montell and Emmy Sharlatt, 2014, 60mn.

Synopsis: the focus is the award-winning Camera Project, created in 2007 by Jerusalem-based human rights watchdog group B'Tselem, to provide Palestinians living in the West Bank or in the Gaza Strip with inexpensive video cameras and the training to use them. The project aims to empower Palestinians to document human rights violations and to provide evidence both to the public and to Israeli authorities. Cameras are an apt tool for this 25-year-old organization, since the Hebrew word B'tselem means "in the image of." Camera Project footage from three Palestinian women volunteers, together with the women's discussion of their film work and their interactions with Israeli settlers and authorities, are paced by black-and-white animated drawings. B'Tselem staff offer commentary, including the film co-director's daughter Jessica Montell, the executive director for 12 years. Camera Project creator explains the impact of watching footage of settlers harassing Palestinians. And B'Tselem spokesperson declares herself "all right" after being shot just above the knee. In her hands: not a weapon, but a camera.

Naila and the Uprisings by Julia Bacha, 2017, 76mn.

Synopsis: When an uprising breaks out in the Occupied Palestinian Territories in 1987, a young woman in Gaza must make a choice between love, family, and freedom. The film chronicles the remarkable real-life journey of Naila Ayesh, a key figure in the First Intifada, which forced the world to recognize the Palestinian right to self-determination for the first time. Using evocative animation, intimate interviews, and exclusive archival footage, this film tells the story the mainstream media missed: of a courageous clandestine women's movement at the head of Palestinians' struggle for freedom, bringing out of anonymity the courageous women activists whose contributions and sacrifices changed history, but whose stories have remained untold until now.

The Wanted 18, Amer Shomaly, 2014, 75mn.

Synopsis: The first Intifada, 1987. Palestinian leaders urge communities to develop alternatives to Israeli products. In response, a group of Palestinian activists start a collective dairy farm with 18 head
of cattle. Once their “Intifada milk” gains popularity, the Israeli army orders the farm’s closure, declaring the cows a threat to national security. The activists persevere, hiding the cows in caves and continuing to produce Palestinian milk. This is the story of the most powerful army in the Middle East chasing 18 cows.

PART 3 – LOVE: INSIDE AND BEYOND BORDERS

Session 11 – 28th November

Affective Relationships as tools of resistance and subversion

Readings:
SALIH, Ruba, 2017, Bodies that Walk, Bodies that Talk, Bodies that Love: Palestinian Women Refugees, Affectivity and the Politics of the Ordinary, Antipode, 49(3) pp.742-760.
Films:
Synopsis: the film director uses a mixture of romantic comedy and quirky humor to shed light on the problems of Palestinians. E.S. (Suleiman and his girlfriend Manal Khader), because they live in separate cities, must meet near an Israeli checkpoint. The film is more than a series of usually comic and poignant scenes in which Suleiman and others must confront any number of Israeli nemeses.

Habibi Rasak Kharban by Susan Youssef, 2011, 78mn.
Synopsis: Habibi, based on the Arabic folkloric story of Layla and Qays (the Arabic Romeo and Juliet) is re-told, and filmed, in modern day Gaza. The subjects of this tragic romance are two university students studying in the West Bank whose love story is abruptly interrupted after their student visas are revoked by Israel and they are forced to return to their families in Gaza. Desperate to be together, Qays requests to marry Layla but is refused by her middle-class family who feel he is too poor to support her. Trapped between political oppression and a patriarchal society, the young couple take matters into their own hands in order to be together.

The Olive Harvest by Elias Hanna, 2002, 83mn.
Synopsis: Mazen has just finished serving a 15-year sentence in an Israeli prison for setting a fire on a Jewish settlement. His younger brother Taher brings him back to the Palestinian countryside he loves so dearly. There is a large and festive party for Mazen, but he is no longer animated by politics whereas his brother is enraged over the checkpoints and the new settlements that are being set up. Both men are unprepared for the conflict that will erupt between them from within the Palestinian community. And since their parents are dead, they are all they have in the world. Raeda, by far the most beautiful woman in the village, has never kissed a man and is quite unsure about her emotions. She is close to her older sister who has disappointed her authoritarian father by moving to the city. Knowing that his cancer is getting worse, he gets Mazen to promise that he will look after the 200,000-year old olive tree which is sacred to him and other elders in the community. On his death bed, the patriarch tries to exert his will over his daughter Raeda. The rift between the father and the two brothers proves to be a very painful process for everyone.

Wajib by Annemarie Jacir, 2017, 97mn.
Synopsis: architect Shadi returns to Nazareth from Rome to help with preparations for the upcoming wedding of his sister Amal. Together with his divorced father Abu Shadi, a teacher, the two men drive
around the city in an old Volvo, delivering invitations to all the people who must be invited. The film's title 'Duty', and part of the tension between father and son comes from what this term really means. For the older man, the rituals of community are a duty to be performed in order to maintain cohesion and not lose traditions. His son finds the whole process meaningless, and gets especially angry when his father insists on inviting an Israeli whose job clearly is to act as a spy for the government. Shadi quickly tires of the whole invitation delivery ceremony, in which he's shown off as a prize catch for families with eligible daughters, even though he lives with his Palestinian girlfriend back in Rome. This too becomes a source of contention: Her father's position within the PLO makes her suspect, since Abu Shadi views the organization as an elitist club lacking a real understanding of what life is like for Palestinians living in Israel.

Session 12 – 5th December

**Falling in love with the ‘enemy’**

**Readings:**


**Synopsis**: the film director, a Palestinian citizen of Israel, leaves her childhood village of Fureidis for an urban existence in Israeli-Jewish Tel Aviv. Filming her daily life, she breaks all taboos and starts dating Jonathan, a new immigrant from Canada. She also joins the Israeli Meretz party, dreaming of a future in politics. Life becomes increasingly untenable as Israel invades Gaza and Jonathan’s Zionist grandfather arrives for a nostalgic visit to the kibbutz he helped establish. As this intimate, raw, nuanced, and thought-provoking cinéma vérité film reminds us, love can’t always conquer all.

**Jaffa** de Keren Yedaya, 2009, 102mn.

**Synopsis**: Jaffa is a mixed Arabic-Jewish seaside city near Tel Aviv, where Reuven Wolf has a garage for repairing cars. His wife Ossi, a vain, self-centered woman, just makes everybody’s life difficult. The couple's daughter, Mali Wolf, has secretly fallen in love with her childhood friend, the young Tawfik, a hard-working youth who has come as a helping hand to his Israeli-Arab father Hassan, a long-time mechanic working for Reuven. Meanwhile, Reuven’s son Meir resents working in the garage and further resents the presence of Arab Palestinian Tawfik, and bullies him around. In a most tragic night, everybody’s life is changed. Meir and his mother have a grave argument and she throws him out. Next morning, a crisis erupts between Meir and Tawfik with the latter fatally injuring Meir in an unfortunate accident. This cancels the plan the already pregnant Mali and her lover Tawfik had made to elope. Although she decides to have an abortion so as not to have a baby from her brother’s killer, she eventually decides to keep the baby, concealing that the child is from Tawfik, and the devastated Wolf family moves to Ramat Gan. The story picks up after 9 years, when Tawfik is released from jail and Mali Wolf is torn between allegiance to her family who has helped her raise the illegitimate child Shiran and her lover Tawfik.

**Would you Have Sex With an Arab?** by Yolande Zauberman, 2001, 85mn.
Synopsis: A journey through the night, from encounter to encounter, from the bars of Tel-Aviv to the back-alleys of Jerusalem. We’re embarking on a magic carpet. Inside night-clubs people dance, laugh, have fun. Dawn breaks to the sound of an outdoor rave party. And finishes with an incredible kiss on the beach. A first kiss. Jews, Arabs, all citizens of a same country. Israel. With no wall to separate them. One Israeli out of five is Arab… However… a simple question is enough to take everyone by surprise. To some: "Would You Have Sex With an Arab?". To others: "Would You Have Sex With An Israeli Jew?" They don’t expect that. Unsettled, they laugh, hesitate, improvise, and are even surprised by their own reactions. Many hadn’t even thought about it. To be together? An invisible barrier appears. But desire too. Maybe…

PART 4 – TOWARDS A ‘ONE’ OR A ‘TWO-STATE’ SOLUTION?

Session 13 – 12th December

Israeli and Palestinian options

Readings:
BOULOS, Sonia () "The Nation State Law and the Internal Right to Self-Determination of Palestinian Citizens of Israel".

Films:
Aid but no State. The EU’S role in the Middle East Conflict by Sabrina Dittus, 2015, 58mn.

Synopsis: Since the Oslo Accords of 1993 and 1995 over $ 25 billion in donor aid went to Palestine. This is, per capita, one of the highest levels of aid in the world. Officially the funds are aimed towards the building of institutions of a future democratic, independent and viable Palestinian State, existing side by side and in peace with Israel. This mantra has been stated in thousands of documents and brochures since 1993. Traditionally, the EU is the biggest donor to the Palestinian territories. But after 20 years the results are disastrous. The prospect of a Palestinian State is further away than ever, the situation in the Palestinian territories is in many respects worse than before Oslo: The economic situation is difficult, a quarter of the population lives in poverty, unemployment rate in the West Bank is at nearly 17%, in Gaza even at 43%, the highest in the world. Only 18% of the West Bank are under Palestinian control. And the amount of water that Palestinians can drill from their own water resources today is less than 20 years ago. Despite billions of dollars in donor aid that went into the water sector.

Etat Commun de Eyal Sivan, 2012, 123mn. Audio:

Synopsis: Au-delà de tout ce qui a pu être écrit, filmé, photographié sur le conflit Israélo-Palestinien, ce documentaire propose un dispositif original et inédit pour mettre en avant un concept révolutionnaire. Vingt ans après les accords d’Oslo, « la solution des deux états » est dans l’impasse. Le concept d’État commun propose d’abandonner la notion de partition du territoire pour embrasser celle du partage. Par le truchement du montage se concrétise une rencontre que le conflit empêche depuis si longtemps. Des juifs israéliens et des arabes palestiniens d’Israël, des territoires occupés ou de la diaspora, des responsables politiques et des militants, des réfugiés et des colons, des jeunes
et des vieux, des universitaires et des artistes : des fils et des filles de ce pays qui s’étend entre le Jourdain et la mer. Une conversation potentielle. L’un parle l’autre écoute.


**Synopsis** : The Nation Estate project consists of a 9-minute sci-fi short film and series offering a clinically dystopian, yet humorous approach to the deadlock in the Middle East. With its glossy mixture of computer-generated imagery, live actors and an arabesque electronica soundtrack, the Nation Estate film explores a vertical solution to Palestinian statehood. Palestinians have their state in the form of a single skyscraper: the Nation Estate. One colossal high-rise houses the entire Palestinian population - now finally living the high life.

**Roadmap to Apartheid** by Ana Nogueira & Eron Davidson, 2012, 95mn.

**Synopsis** : Ana Nogueira is a white South African and Eron Davidson a Jewish Israeli. Drawing on their first-hand knowledge of the issues, the producers take a close look at the apartheid comparison often used to describe the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Their film breaks down the rhetorical analogy into a fact-based comparison, noting where the analogy is useful and appropriate, and where it is not. There are many lessons to draw from the South African experience relevant to conflicts all over the world. This film is as much a historical document of the rise and fall of apartheid, as it is a film about why many Palestinians feel they are living in an apartheid system today, and why an increasing number of people around the world agree with them.

**Session 14 – 19th December**

**Presentation of the intermediary papers by the groups**

3. **Evaluation and Grading**

The evaluation is based on regular attendance, participation in the debates, texts' and movies' critical presentations during the seminar, the pre-final oral presentation of the paper during the last session of the seminar, and the final written paper.

For the final group papers, students will work around a number of topics developed during the seminar. In principle, the final papers will be co-signed by groups of 3-4 students. Individual papers may be negotiated.

Students will be graded according to their presence, participation, class presentation (30%), on the one side, and for their final papers (70%) on the other side.

This course is granted 6 ECTS: attendance/participation (1 ECTS), presentations of texts and movies during the seminar (2 ECTS) and final paper (3 ECTS). Each ECTS is equivalent to 25-30 hours of work.

**Academic Code of conduct**

The written assignments must represent an original work, with the use of all resources properly cited. Plagiarism, cheating or violation of the academic honor code will NOT be tolerated, and will be dealt with according to Institute rules' policy. Student assignments will be randomly selected to be checked using software designed to identify academic plagiarism. Please, note that assignments that are confirmed to contain plagiarized material will be given a ‘O’ grade.
General Resources on Israeli and Palestinian cinemas and filmmakers

Written:

Audio-visual:
Français)
Résumé : la première partie (1932 - 1978) s'attache au mouvement sioniste et à l'existence même
d'un état en perpétuelle quête d'identité et de reconnaissance, la seconde période (1978 - 2007)
presente un cinéma plus politique et plus polémique, reflet d'une société civile multiforme et non
consensuelle. Le documentaire contient d'inombrables extraits de films et d'entretiens avec
de manants spécialistes (réalisateur, auteurs, écrivains, critiques, journalistes...).
Ella SHOHAT and Rasha SALTI on Israeli and Palestinian Cinema :
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ikxZ_Yg2u_U&list=PLo50no-cDy3TTusS4U07ZQ9UIQSE34EtZ
Riccardo BOCCO sur 'Le Sionisme, l'Occident et la création de l'Etat israélien' :
https://vimeo.com/337222781/1a7d19242e

Websites:
http://palestinefilmfoundation.org/index.asp
THE QARQ (Quote, Argument, Relation, Question) MODEL

Students introducing the texts and the films for the debate during the seminar’s sessions will be invited to:

**Quote** – Cite a sentence or two from the text (and/or from the film) which reflects the authors’ main argument(s).

**Argument** – Synoptically present author’s argument in your own language. If relevant, mention which thesis the author is defending and which one she is arguing against.

**Relation** – When possible, connect the argument of the text under discussion with those of the same sessions or texts previously discussed. Show how author’s argument supports or undermines argument of other authors. Also, when pertinent, connect the argument of the texts with the discourse/analysis provided in the film.

**Question** – Frame a question about the position or consistency of the argument: a) e.g., an issue which the author is silent about, and why this silence, and b) question about a dimension in the text that may not be amply addressed. Ideally, question should be internal to the text.