Stop! Close your eyes. Imagine a city. Think of all the things you can see. (You can open your eyes now!) Now try listing them. The inventory quickly grows . . . endless, isn't it? But there is more to the city than simply an inventory of the visible. There are some things that can't quite be seen: feelings, perhaps, or maybe a sense of the city's social relations. Eyes open or eyes closed, there are so many things to keep in mind. This doesn't mean that we should give up on thinking about cities, whether as a whole, or in the fine threads that link them together, or in their tiniest details. Far from it. (Pile & Thrift, City A-Z, 2000: xix)

Please note the dates of the meetings as specified below

Class Description

This lecture series is designed to offer you, NYU student in Tel Aviv, a broad perspective on Israeli society and the Middle East at large, and to open paths for self-exploration while studying abroad. In this series, we seek to inquire whether there is one Israeli society, or several. How are societies and cultures constituted in general terms, what does it mean to speak of society and culture as a coherent whole and whose perspective counts in establishing what Israeli society is? Throughout this course, we aim not only to teach you what we know, but to question, discuss and reflect how we know what we know too.

The lectures - brought to you by experts in various disciplines and eminent cultural and political Israelis, alongside excursions in and outside Israel - will set for you geographical and social coordinates from which you'll be given the opportunity to engage yourself in this vibrant locality, learn its history and explore contemporary aspects of a place which is always lively, controversial and intriguing. In respect to this, the course will also equip you with the needed methodological tools that will enable your own personal exploration to imbue your time and experience as a global citizen in Israel with new meanings. Students are invited to offer their own topics/lectures/visits as part of the course.

Desired Outcomes

This course aims to provide you with the tools to explore and familiarize yourself with a new culture, render it comprehensible to yourself and to your peers. A personal project is its main outcome and goal, as it reflects your learning experience through combining your academic field(s) of interest with a personal Israeli experience. Thus, the personal projects are integral to the course, as they, together with the course readings, lectures and trips, create a third body of knowledge, which is neither local nor external. You thus become not only the recipient of knowledge, but also its author.
**Assessment Components**

Attendance is mandatory (no unexcused absences are permitted)

1. You are expected to attend all activities, after reading the assigned readings (*please follow the designated assignments below*), participate in class and offering your own perspective. You’re also invited to contribute by asking to present your work, or share your reflections and experience in relation to a specific activity/class.

2. Your midterm assignment is based on several phases in which you’ll set up the foundations for your project. These include the preliminary identification of your topic, submission of a research question by **week 3**, bringing in raw data from your ‘field’ and articulating a research proposal. This will be done through personal engagements with the course instructor. Details will be further discussed in class.

3. The final project is the centrepiece of this course. After approval, you are free to start working autonomously on the research project, which will reflect your personal interest in being in Israel. The product of this project may be in the form of an essay, film, or any other form as approved with the professor, and should involve various methods of exploration. Your work will be evaluated on its originality and depth of research.

4. We are having our own NYU/TLV journal, and will be happy if you submit your final project for this publication. Each work submitted is undergoing additional review and if it is decided to include your work, you might be asked to revise it and review it after it will have been edited. You are more than welcome to write your project with this aim in mind, and we will be happy to assist and advise you accordingly.

Failure to submit or fulfil any required component results in failure of the class.

**Reading and assignments**

It is recommended that you read during your stay at least one book on Israeli society, and if you're interested in bringing your own reading for discussion in class, we will be happy to do so. Bear in mind that you're required to read the assigned material for each session. These materials are posted on our Blackboard site.

All reports should be sent directly to me at *Gal.levy@nyu.edu*

*Please DO NOT attach a word file, but write directly in the message body*

**Recommended Texts**


**Internet Research Guidelines**

It is hard to overestimate the importance of the internet, or its contribution, to the build up of contemporary knowledge of the world around us. Albeit it needs to be used wisely. This means that one must be selective and careful when relating to internet-based sources, identifying and distinguishing opinions from facts, and journalism from academics. Most importantly, one should make clear reference to internet sources, allowing the reader the opportunity to consult these resources as and if required.

Please also note that the ‘world-wide web’ – www – exists in many languages. Many sources about Israel in English, for instance, will be aimed at tourists or readers living primarily in English-speaking regions of the world. Sources might differ when reading them in other languages. Use the internet critically.

You can never be too safe, so do ensure both the reader and yourself that you know well what your internet sources are.

**Grading**

The course is pass/fail. In order for you to pass the course, you must

a) Attend all sessions and co-curricular activities

b) Submit all reading reports as requested

c) Submit a project proposal

d) Submit a final project

An F grade will be given if you fail to meet any of these criteria.

**Additional Required Equipment**

A camera, a video-camera, a sketch book – anything that may help you get your message through.

**5 Sep**

Tel Aviv Museum

Tel Aviv-Yaffa: An Artistic Perspective

Elie Azoulay-Armon

An excursion to Tel Aviv Museum of Art

**Session 1**

12 Sep

**Introduction I: A Synoptic View**

Israel has been variously characterized as a settler/frontier/ethno-democratic society, at the core of which is a constant struggle over its collective identity, its relations to its Arab citizens and, after 1967, to the occupied territories and their inhabitants. In this introductory session, attention will be given to formative events in the history of Israel as triggers of change in Israeli society, its politics and culture.

**Assignment 1**

From the global readings folder in Blackboard, choose two (2) pieces to read, preferably prior to the class meeting. Please summarize in one short paragraph the main argument of each reading and explain why do you think this reading is relevant to your being a student abroad. Please submit electronically no later than 12/9/2011 (which is not ninth of December but the other way round! – here is cultural immersion for you).

Last reminder not to attach as a file but send to me in the body of the email message. Thanks
**Session 2**  
3 Oct  

**Explorations in literature: Meet the Author**  
*Etgar Keret, writer*  

**Reading:**  


Also, read a review on his latest book:  

A choice of translated works at [www.etgarkeret.com](http://www.etgarkeret.com)  

**Assignment 2**  
From the folder *a place called Israel* in Blackboard, choose two (2) pieces to read. Please summarize in one short paragraph the main argument of each reading and explain what is Israel in the eyes of these writers.  

Please submit electronically no later than 1/10/2011

**Session 3**  
10 Oct  

**“Here” and “There”: Israeli Art between the Mediterranean and Diaspora**  
Guest speaker the artist Dr. Ayelet Zohar will survey major trends and directions taken by Israeli visual artists, enquiring into several issues concerning the problem of identity in an age of immigration. Subjects discussed will consider the romantic and Orientalist attitudes towards the Arab population of Palestine in the 1920s; the material qualities of the new ‘homeland’ – from its bright light to the impoverished material culture; the idealized modesty and socialism of the 1950s-60s; the tensions between Holy Jerusalem and Secular Tel Aviv as a main theme in Israeli culture; provincial life vs. the big art centers in Paris, London and NYC; the cult of the *Sabra*. Her talk also addresses the cultural and political significance of the split from Judaism and diasporic Jews as expressed in the works of Canaanite artists; expressions of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in the visual field; works by Israeli-Palestinian artists who react to Zionist conventions, placing a reversed mirror and a critique of the Zionist project from their position.  

**Reading:**  

### Jerusalem & Negev trip

**14-17 Oct**

The Jerusalem trip is led by **Dr. Jackie Feldman**, Ben-Gurion University.

*Reading on the idea of collective memory:*


*Recommended reading on the ‘question of Jerusalem’:


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### Galilee/North Trip

**11-13 Nov**

Led by Dr. **Nimrod Luz**, The Western Galilee College, a political geographer and tour guide, with a special (vested) interest in the co-living of Arabs and Jews in the Galilee.

*Assignment 5*

*Reading prior to departure:*


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### Session 4

**14 Nov**

**Documenting Israel: Meet the Director**

Film director **Mor Loushy** will talk about ethical dilemmas and challenges in the process of making documentary films: the subtle relations between empathy and criticism; the interplay between cultural specificity and general message; representation and reality etc. These issues will be discussed in relation to her controversial documentary *Israel Ltd.*, which addresses issues such as the ways in which Israelis understand themselves, represent themselves to others, as well as their attitudes towards minority cultures, within the context of the Israeli-Arab conflict.

*Reading:*

Session 5  
TBD  
**Architecture and social relations in Tel Aviv-Yaffa**  
Architect Yoav Meiri will take us on a tour to the southern neighbourhoods of Tel Aviv and talk about the relation between the built environment and social relationships.

*Reading:*  

Assignment 3  
From the folder *political geography and urbanism* in Blackboard, read the two (2) pieces. Please summarize in one short paragraph the main argument of each reading and explain what are the main characteristics of the politics of space in Israel. Please submit electronically no later than 16/11/2011

Session 6  
5 Dec  
**Is there really an Israeli Music**  
*Readings:*  

Session 7  
Final Project  
TBD  
**An American (or anyone else) in Tel Aviv; or What is it to be a Global Citizen?**  
Presentations of projects and concluding discussion

Final Project  
**Personal project:** Students are required to submit a project which reflects a personal exploration into Israel or the Middle East at large. The project may be in the form of a text (essay) or visual (series of images, stills or video, accompanied by explanatory text).  
*Students need to submit a written description, and receive approval of their topic and the method of investigation by Week 6 of the semester. Approval is required for receiving a pass grade.*

Submission guides  
*Please note that you are required to submit your project no later than 20 December 2011 by email to me (this time, attachments are welcomed)*  
*If your project is comprised of a huge file, you can use file sharing sites, such as [www.yousendit.com](http://www.yousendit.com) (use the free trial to avoid payment) or similar. You can also submit a hard copy or a flash drive if you wish.*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Required Co-curricular Activities</th>
<th>All designated group trips are a part of this course.</th>
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<tr>
<td><em>Suggested Co-curricular Activities</em></td>
<td>Besides the required trips there are several other excursions attached to different courses. In most cases these are open to non-registered students (while required to those who are). Students are encouraged to join these trips (when they’re open, and with prior notice to Hadar), and it is highly recommended also to take your own tours in the country. Israel is a small place and highly accessible, so depending on your personal interests you are advised to consult us and arrange to go places, explore them and meet with local people.</td>
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