

Passing & Politics of Identity: Connecting Modern Israeli and African American Cultures



Prof. Roy Holler | Fall 2020 | JST3930 | M,W,F | Period 6 (12:50 PM - 1:40 PM) | Office Hours: TBA

Course Description: Aren't we all *passing*? Moving between identities daily, changing our personalities, hiding behind masks and presenting ourselves to be different than who we are? In some cases, passing between identities help us adjust to certain demands of a mainstream culture. But at what cost? Which parts of us are being lost when dealing in such ventures? In this course we will define passing through its historical African American roots, and then seek manifestations of the phenomena in modern Israeli cultures, examining the complex relationships between various global and Israeli identities. We will begin our session talking about the implications and the possible outcomes of comparing unique and different experiences. We will see the extreme stakes of African American passers at the turn of the 20th century and ask what passing means today. With this new knowledge we will move to Modern Israeli society, seeking to define national integrationist narratives through passing, looking to reevaluate our own negotiation of identity/difference in today's world.

Students will achieve these outcomes through class discussions and assignments that emphasize:

- The cultural and historical context through which modern Israeli society evolved.
- Key Israeli texts, histories and literature, that correspond with, and help us understand different forms of Modern Israeli culture, society and identity.
- The complex relationships between different models of Israeli identity—culture/ethnicity/race and gender—and the interpretation of ideas on which they are based.
- Familiarity with *passing*, a key historical and contemporary American phenomenon.
- Exploration of one's own connection and identification with the intersection of the Black/Jewish experience, and (re)assessing the intellectual and cultural framework that constructs our personal and political views.

Students will gain the skills needed to show deeper appreciation of unfamiliar cultural production in both oral and written form, while learning to recognize and respond to key elements of Judaism through a comparative lens.

Attendance. You are expected to be present in all of our sessions. You are allowed to miss 3 classes no questions asked. I will deduct a quarter of a letter grade for each missed class beyond the first 3.

Zoom Etiquette. This class is to be taught through Zoom, and as such it will demand a little patience and etiquette from all of us. To make this class as enjoyable and collaborative experience as possible, you should be virtually present during our sessions. Your webcam needs to be on, and in a professional setup (as much as possible), meaning, for example, have an appropriate attire, don't lie in bed, minimal technological distractions etc... This course is largely based on discussion and I expect you to participate in each session, at least once, in order to receive a participation point.

Academic Honesty: The University of Florida Student Honor Code is located at this link: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/honorcodes/honorcode.php>. UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, "We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: "On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment." The Honor Code (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honorcode/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel.

Students with Disabilities: Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

Bottom Line.

Attendance - 10%

Discussion – 15%

Assignments, Quizzes – 20%

Midterm Paper - 25%

Final Project - 30%



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Reading Schedule

Part I - Passing Defined

Week 1. 8.31 – 9.4	M.	Introduction.
	W.	Allyson Hobbs, <i>A Chosen Exile</i> . Intro.
	F.	Langston Hughes, “Passing.”
Week 2: 9.7 – 9.11	M.	No Class.
	W.	Nella Larsen, <i>Passing</i> (Part I, One + Two)
	F.	<i>Passing</i> (Part I, Three + Four)
Week 3: 9.14 – 9.18	M.	<i>Passing</i> (Part II)
	W.	<i>Passing</i> (Part III)
	F.	Screening: Ice Cube’s <i>Black. White.</i>
Week 4: 9.21 - 9.25	M.	<i>Black. White.</i> Discussion.
	W.	Hughes, “Theme for English B.”
	F.	Kenji Yoshino, “Covering,” Introduction

Part II - The Passing of a Nation

Week 5:	M.	Isaac Bashevis Singer, "Yentl the Yeshiva Boy"9.28 – 10.2
	W.	"Yentl the Yeshiva Boy," Cont.
	F.	A.B. Yehoshua, “Who is a Jew”
Week 6: 10.5 – 10.9	M.	<i>Oded the Wanderer</i> . Screening + Discussion
	W.	Haim Hazaz, “The Sermon.
	F.	Dahn Ben-Amotz. <i>To Remember, To Forget.</i>
Week 7: 10.12 – 10.16	M.	<i>To Remember, To Forget.</i> Cont.
	W.	Ilana Sugbaker Messika. "Memories of an Indian Upbringing"
	F.	Student Conferences

Part III - Culture Clash

Week 8: M. A.B. Yehoshua, "Defining who is an Israeli"
10.19 – 10.23 W. Kanafani, "Returning to Haifa"
F. Kanafani, "Returning to Haifa." Part II + **Midterm Paper Due**

Week 9: M. Orly Castel-Bloom. "Umami Fi Shurl."
10.26 – 10.30 W. Katya Gibel Mevorach "Perspectives on Identity. Black/Jewish"
F. No class.

Part IV - Israeli/Black/Jewish

Week 10: M. Ars Poetica: Adi Keissar, "Black on Black"
11.2 – 11.6 W. Roy Hasan, "The Language of my Parents"
F. Dalia Betolin-Sherman, "Circle of Friends"

Week 11: M. Esti Almo Wexler. *Lady Titi*. Screening
11.9 – 11.13 W. Finish *Lady Titi*. Discussion.
F. Sidetracking: Rebecca Walker, *Black, White and Jewish*. Selections.

Part V - A Pretty Pass

Week 12: M. Haim Bouzaglo, *Fictitious Marriage*.
11.16 – 11.20 W. Discussion.
F. Sayed Kashua, *Second Person Singular*.

Week 13: M. *Arab Labor*. Selections.
11.23 – 11.27 W. *Second Person Singular*. Finish.
F. *Fauda*. Screening

Week 14: M. *Fauda*. Discussion
11.30 – 12.4 W/F. Thanksgiving – No Class.

Week 15: **Final Project Showcase**
12.7 – 12.9