

The Israeli-Arab Conflict on Stage and Screen

Prof. Roy Holler | Fall 2025



The stage and the cinema have long been venues for fictional and documentary portrayals of the conflict, offering rich, nuanced perspectives that challenge and critique the narratives presented by official state ideologies. Through screenings, readings, and discussions, we will engage with a variety of visual and literary works that interrogate the complex and often contentious relationship between Israelis and Palestinians.

Students will analyze how theatrical productions and films challenge national myths and confront issues of identity, displacement, and resistance, and how these works reflect the realities of war, occupation, and cultural conflict. By examining these representations, students will deepen their understanding of the historical, political, and social dynamics at play in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The course will provide a platform for critical thinking on how media can act as a tool for social change and dialogue, allowing students to explore the intersection of art, politics, and social history.

This course encourages students to consider the diverse ways in which narratives are constructed and contested, both in the Israeli and Palestinian contexts, and equips them with the tools to engage critically with the world of theater and film as they pertain to complex geopolitical conflicts.

Required Course Materials

I will provide you with all readings through the course site. These texts must be brought to class. Failure to come in with the assigned readings will result in removal of student from session.

Movies and Documentaries: Students will view films during the semester. Some films will be screened in class. Others will be available through streaming services or via direct link. Students must see required films no later than they are assigned.

List of Graded Work

Assignment	Description	Requirements	Points
Reading Journal	Through course website. Self-reflection/free-write responses to the assigned weekly readings.	200 words weekly (10-15 min to complete each week)	200 – 20%
Analytical Essay	Comparative, 6-page paper analyzing course themes through literary analysis of two works from the syllabus. Students will use a given question bank or a topic of their choice. (This assignment will count towards the Writing Requirement.)	1500 Words (3-5 hours to complete)	200 – 35%
Creative Project	Create a website	Website that includes a home page and three more web pages.	35%
Participation	Class discussion and group work.	Active participation	100 – 10%

GradingScale

For information on how UF assigns grade points, visit: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/>

A	94 – 100%		C	74 – 76%
A-	90 – 93%		C-	70 – 73%
B+	87 – 89%		D+	67 – 69%
B	84 – 86%		D	64 – 66%
B-	80 – 83%		D-	60 – 63%
C+	77 – 79%		E	<60



Tentative Reading/Viewing List:

Week1 (Jan.13th): Practice Distant Reading

Tue. Welcome!

Thu. Brecht. *Mother Courage*. (Scenes 1 – 3).

Week2 (Jan.20th): Distant Reading, Cont.

Tue. Finish: *Mother Courage*. Scenes 4 - 7.

Thu. Early Zionist Films. Selections + Michael Stanislawski "The Jews: Religion or Nation?"

Week3 (Jan.27th): National/Heroic Cinema

Tue. *Hill 24 Doesn't Answer* (1955) + Scham, "Competing Israeli and Palestinian Narratives"

Thu. Shohat, Ella. "Israeli Cinema: East West and the Politics of Representation"

Week4 (Feb.3rd): The Nakba

Tue. Ram Levi. *Khirbet Khizeh*. Screening

Thu. Beinun and Hajjar, "Palestine, Israel and the Arab-Israeli Conflict."

Week5 (Feb.10th): Theater of Resistance

Tue. Ghassan Kanfani. *Returning to Haifa*. (Act 1 + 2).

Thu. *Returning to Haifa*. Finish + Barbara Harlow "Return to Haifa: 'Opening the Borders' in Palestinian Literature."

Week6 (Feb.17th): Palestinian Cinema and Israeli New Wave Cinema

Tue. "The Flower of All Cities" (1969), "The Urgent Call of Palestine" (1973) + Gertz and Khleifi, "Bleeding Memories to Fertile Memories" + "They Don't Exist." Abu Ali (1974).

Thu. *Hamsin* (1982) + Telmissany, "Displacement and Memory"

Week7 (Feb.24th) Trading Places

Tue. Haim Buzaglo. *Fictitious Marriage* (1988) + **Midterm Paper Due**

Thu. Discussion + Carol Bardenstein. "Cross/Cast : Passing in Israeli and Palestinian Cinema"

Week8 (Mar.3rd): Shooting and Crying

Tue. *Lebanon*. (2009) + *Waltz with Bashir* (2008).

Thu. Benziman, Yuval. "Mom, I'm Home": Israeli Lebanon-War Films as Inadvertent Preservers of the National Narrative." *Israel Studies* 18.3

Week 9 (Mar. 10th): Cinematic Responses to the Intifada

Tue. *Paradise Now* (2005) + Yaqub, Nadia. "Paradise Now: Narrating a Failed Politics" *Film in the Middle East and North Africa: Creative Dissidence* (2011): 219-227.

Thu. LGBTQ voices: *Walk on Water* + *The Bubble* (2007) Stein, Rebecca L. "EXPLOSIVE Scenes from Israel's Gay Occupation." *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 16.4

----- SPRING BREAK -----

Week 10 (Mar. 24th): "My God, we really can do anything!"

Tue. Hanoch Levin, *Murder* (Act 1 + 2).

Thu. *Murder*. (Act 3) + "Narratives of Armed Conflict and Terrorism in the Theatre: Tragedy and History in Hanoch Levin's *Murder*" Freddie Rokem (2002).

Week 11 (March 31st): A New Palestine?

Mon. *Wedding in Galilee* (1987) + Nurith, and George Khleifi. "Palestinian Cinema: Landscape, Trauma and Memory" (2008): 74-100.

Thu. *Paradise Now* + Yaqub, Nadia. "Paradise Now: Narrating a Failed Politics" *Film in the Middle East and North Africa: Creative Dissidence* (2011): 219-227.

Week 12 (Apr. 7th): Co-Existence?

Mon. *Junction 48* (2016) + "'If I Could Go Back in Time': Rethinking Popular Culture, Social Justice, and the Compassionate Gaze in Palestine, Rebekah E. Moore (2023).

Thu. Hillel Kogan, *We Love Arabs*.

Week 13 (April 14th):

Mon. *Dance and Authenticity in Israel and Palestine. Performing the Nation*. Elke Kaschl (2003) (1-31).

Thu. Final Project Showcase.

Week 14 (April 21st):

Mon. Final Project Showcase.

Student Learning Outcomes:

Content: Students demonstrate competence in the terminology, concepts, theories and methodologies used within the discipline(s).

- Identify, describe, and explain the development of the Israel-Arab conflict, as presented in film, and theater. Assessments: Class participation, journal entries, comparative papers and final project.
- Identify and critique how conflict and displacement influence global systems, through the preceptive of the Israeli and its neighbor states. Assessments: Class participation, journal entries, comparative papers and final project.

Critical Thinking: Students carefully and logically analyze information from multiple perspectives and develop reasoned solutions to problems within the discipline(s).

- Analyze and Evaluate literary, historical and visual narratives by and about soldiers, victims of war, refugees and displaced individuals, that depict the experience and help us construct a critical approach to our own experiences of privilege and prejudice. Assessments: Class participation, journal entries, short and comparative papers and Final Project.
- Connect the complex relationships in the Middle-East and how these are influenced and altered by variants like religion/ ethnicity/race and gender. Assessments: Class participation, journal entries, short and comparative papers and Final Project.

Communication: Students communicate knowledge, ideas and reasoning clearly and effectively in written and oral forms appropriate to the discipline(s).

- Develop and present their own findings in writing and through experiential projects that apply the experience of local conflicts, to better express their own backgrounds and realities, engaging with other lived experiences. Assessments: Class participation, journal entries, short and comparative papers and Final Project.

Connection: Students communicate knowledge, ideas and reasoning clearly and effectively in written and oral forms appropriate to the discipline(s).

- Review how narratives of conflicts can help students create approaches and strategies promoting justice and equality to local and global minorities and migrant sub-groups
Assessments: Class participation, journal entries, comparative papers and final project.

Attendance Policy:

Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found

at: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>

You may miss two class sessions (i.e. one week) without explanation or excuse. For each subsequent unexcused missed class I reserve the right to reduce your final course grade one-half of a letter grade (so, from A to A-).

Students Requiring Accommodation:

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the disability Resource Center by visiting <https://disability.ufl.edu/students/get-started/> [Links to an external site.](#) It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester.

UFEvaluations Process:

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available

at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/Links to an external site..> Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/Links to an external site..> Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results>.

University Honesty Policy:

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 (<https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/Links to an external site.>) 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. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor or TAs in this class.

Counseling and Wellness Center:

Contact information for the Counseling and Wellness Center: <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/Links to an external site.>, 392-1575; and the University Police Department: 392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies.

The Writing Studio:

The writing studio is committed to helping University of Florida students meet their academic and professional goals by becoming better writers. Visit the writing studio online at <http://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/Links to an external site.> or in 2215 Turlington Hall for one-on-one consultations and workshops.

In-Class Recordings:

Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1)

for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor.

A “class lecture” is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and delivered by any instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or lecturer during a class session.

Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To “publish” means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code.