

JWST348 Modern Jewish Studies – Fall 2014

Topic for Fall Semester: From Jewish Diaspora to Israeli State in Literature

Dr. Amit Assis, Monday and Wednesday 16:05 at ARTS150

The state of Israel was imagined in words long before it could have been a realistic political option. This unique situation makes literature highly important in understanding the history of Zionism and Israel and it poses some interesting questions to these literary works. The course follows the way literature that accompanied the Zionist movement from its first phases as a mere ideology to a point when the state of Israel is a cultural and a political fact. We will learn about challenges posed by Jewish history and Zionism to the very act of narration and reality representation. All literary works will be read in English translation.

The main works that will be studied:

Mendele Moykher Sforim: 'The Brief Travels of Benjamin the Third'

T. Hertzl, parts from 'Old-New Land' (Altneuland)

H.N Bialik: 'Behind the Fence' and a couple of poems

Y.H. Brenner, Nerves and the essay The Genre of the Land of Israel and its Related Objects

S. Yizhar, 'Ephraim Goes Back to Alfalfa' and 'The Runaway'

Amos Oz, 'The Way of the Wind'

Meir Shalev, *The Blue Mountain*

Students are required to have:

1. A course pack containing the literary works.
2. Meir Shalev, *The Blue Mountain*, translated by Hillel Halkin, Canongate: Edinburgh

Both books can be purchased at 'Library', McGill Bookstore.

Secondary materials and some supplements will be available on the course' website.

Grading method:

Short responses to the literary readings (35%)

Class participation (15%)

Oral presentation of research work (15%)

Final paper (20%).

Detailed schedule will be given in the beginning of the course.