

Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences

The Crown Family Center for Jewish and Israel Studies

The Program on Israel Studies Inaugural Conference:

The Zionist ideal in Israeli Culture: Dream and Reality

17-19 November, 2013

Rationale

The link between ideology and cultural production has been characteristic of human societies since ancient times. The growth of modern nationalism globally has accentuated the many cultural forms in which ideological concerns are expressed. This connection between ideology and cultural production is of paramount scholarly interest today.

This conference examines interrelationships between Zionist ideology and modern Israeli cultural production. Areas covered will include visual, literary, and performing arts (painting, music, theater, dance, and cinema) and popular culture.

The conference will address several of the following questions:

- What were the *cultural* contents of the post-1948 Zionist ideology?
- Which foundational ethos was endorsed as cultural symbols and what were their sources (for example, Biblical ideals, the ethics of the First to Fifth Aliyahs, the pioneer archetypes)?
- How did the newly-established state of Israel utilize the legacy and perceived lessons of the Jewish past to promote a distinctive Israeli national consciousness?
- What were the artistic representations of such themes as the return to Zion; the redemption of ancestral land; the attachment to the biblical landscape and the defense of the land by a proud and independent military force?

- What institutions were instrumental in rooting the tenets of Zionist ideology in an evolving Israeli culture (for example: Bezalel Academy, The Ministry of Education, The Histadrut, The youth Movements, The IDF)?
- What tensions emerged when Israel attempted to create an Israeli society and culture that breaks with the past, but is nevertheless strongly inspired by it?
- What were the challenges created by the Ingathering of the Exiles from multi-lingual and multi-ethnic backgrounds? Has the “melting pot” ideology given rise to a cohesive cultural environment or has the heterogeneous nature of Israeli society shaped a cultural mosaic which preserves or disrupts distinct ethnic orientations?
- How does Israeli culture reflect both universalist features of Israel society and its sense of national, ethnic, and gendered particularism?
- How are the tensions between the secular and the religious, between western and non-western civilizations, between Ashkenazi and Mizrahi models, between modern and traditional legacies given cultural expression? How did these tensions offer gendered critiques of Zionist ideology, memory, and symbols
- What were the dynamics of change in the representation of Zionist ideology in the arts between 1948 and 2013? How did the transformation in Israeli politics and intellectual thought (Post-Zionism, for example) influence the Israeli cultural production? What was the impact of intergenerational differences?
- What was the impact of the Arab-Israeli conflict on Israeli Jewish and Arab artists, authors, producers and performers? What changes has the image of the “other” (Israeli, Arab, Palestinian) undergone?