

**FROM NAZI HOLOCAUST
TO ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT
2010-2011**

A Discussion Series Co-Sponsored by

**University Living
UM Undergraduate Research Opportunity Program
Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at the UM**



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Introduction

Origins of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict are exceedingly complex, dating back to biblical times as well as embracing numerous, more contemporary issues. This discussion series focuses on the impact of Jewish assimilation into German society during the 1930s and the subsequent Nazi Holocaust on establishment and growth of present-day Israel, as well as its conflict with the Palestinians. Sources of information include a series of feature and documentary DVDs and assigned readings. The recommended texts for this discussion series are *The Holocaust Is Over: We Must Rise from Its Ashes* by Avraham Burg (Palgrave Macmillan, a division of St. Martin's Press LLC, 2008) and *Crossing Mandelbaum Gate: Coming of Age between the Arabs and Israelis, 1956-1978* by Kai Bird (Scribner, a division of Simon & Schuster, Inc., 2010). Professor Richard C. Adelman¹ will present the DVDs and lead the discussions in the 2nd Floor Cultural Center at University Living, 2865 S. Main Street, Ann Arbor, MI 48103 (Tel. 734-669-3030) (Website: www.univliving.com). All information in the present syllabus is quoted or paraphrased from www.amazon.com, www.wikipedia.org, and DVD jackets/brochures).

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Summary Schedule of Activities

<u>Month</u>	<u>Su</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>Tu</u>	<u>W</u>	<u>Th</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>Sa</u>
Oct.	-	-	12	-	-	-	-
	-	-	26	-	-	-	-
Nov.	-	1	2	-	-	-	-
	-	22	23	24	-	-	-
	-	29	30	-	-	-	-
Jan.	-	-	11	-	-	-	-
	-	17	18	-	-	-	-
	-	24	25	-	-	-	-
	-	31					
Feb.			1	-	-	-	-
March	-	7	8	9	-	-	-
	-	28	29	30	-	-	-
April	-	-	12	13	-	-	-
May	-	-	3	4	-	-	-
	-	-	17	18	-	-	-

Detailed Schedule of Classroom and Performance Activities

Tuesday, Oct. 12, 7:00p-

2004 Documentary Film, *We Want the Light*, 1½ hrs.

This DVD is about freedom and captivity, about emancipation, acculturation and assimilation; it is about the roles played by Moses and Felix Mendelssohn in the dream of fruitful, unproblematic integration of the Jews into German society after their liberation from the ghettos; it is about Richard Wagner, his essay *Das Judentum in der Musik* (The Jews in Music) and his influence on the thinking of the Third Reich but, most of all, it is about how much music can mean to people, even in the direst of circumstances, or particularly in the direst circumstances.

The title, *We Want the Light*, is taken from a poem by a 12-year-old girl, Eva Pickova, written in the Theresienstadt concentration camp. Her words provide both the title and the climax - in a setting for two choruses and orchestra by the American composer Franz Waxman, in his work *The Song of Terezin*. The DVD also contains music by Mahler, Bach, Schoenberg, Bruch, Schumann, Mendelssohn, Wagner, Schubert, Bloch and Brahms. (Vladimir Ashkenazy, Daniel Barenboim, Evgeny Kissin, Zubin Mehta, Itzhak Perlman and Pinchas Zukerman, plus three inspiring survivors: Anita Lasker-Wallfisch, Jacques Stroumsa, Alice Sommer Herz and others; Opus Arte, 2004 / 2009)

Tuesday, Oct. 26, 7:00p-

2004 Feature Film, *Imaginary Witness: Hollywood and the Holocaust*, 1½ hrs.

Featuring interviews with Steven Spielberg, Sidney Lumet and other prominent filmmakers and historians, *Imaginary Witness* examines Hollywood's attitude towards one of the most horrific events in world history. Using rare newsreel footage as well as gripping clips from over forty films, this award-winning documentary explores how filmmakers and popular culture have portrayed the Holocaust over the past 60 years. (Narrated by Gene Hackman; a film by Daniel Anker; Koch Lorber, 2004 / 2009)

Monday, Nov. 1, 7:00p-

2002 Feature Film, *Max*, 106 mins.

The dark connections between art, desire, and evil fuel *Max*, an alternate-history fantasy that imagines what might have happened if a Jewish art dealer named Max Rothman (John Cusack, *High Fidelity*) had befriended Adolf Hitler (Noah Taylor, *Shine*) when he was a frustrated artist, before he turned to politics to vent his hatred. Some critics have expressed fear that even to attempt to make Hitler understandable is to diffuse or dismiss his malignancy; but watching Hitler vacillate between Rothman's attempts at mentorship and the encouragement of an ambitious military officer demonstrates the pettiness,

desperation, and craven need that can bring horror into the world. Cusack portrays a generous man with simple decency and not a trace of grandstanding, but Taylor--with glittering eyes and lips twisted with bile--is both fascinating and repellent in an impressive performance. (Lions Gate, 2003 / 2004)

Tuesday, Nov. 2, 7:00p-

1940 Feature Film, *The Mortal Storm*, 100 mins.

This is the story of Hitler's rise to power as seen through the microcosm of one German family. What may seem small and personal is instead towering, a bold revelation of the brutality of the Nazi regime that so infuriated propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels that he banned all MGM movies in Germany. In their fourth and final teaming, Margaret Sullavan and James Stewart play sweethearts, evoking the tender, romantic empathy that always marked their work together. They lead a sterling cast in director Frank Borzage's sweeping tale of the political and human chaos that rips a family apart, sets child against parent and lover against lover, and leads to savagery, to sacrifice and to heroism. (Warner Archive Collection, 1940 / 2010)

Monday, Nov. 22, 7:00p-

1978 Feature Film, *Holocaust* (Parts 1-2), 175 mins.

Originally broadcast on NBC as part of an ongoing TV phenomenon in the 1970s called "The Big Event," *Holocaust* was an original story written by Gerald Green, who later scripted *Kent State* and *Wallenberg: A Hero's Story*, the latter another Holocaust-era tale. *Holocaust* narrowed the enormous story of the Nazis' systematic destruction of Jews by focusing on one family living in Berlin. Fritz Weaver plays Dr. Josef Weiss, a Pole with a longtime family practice. Weiss debates with his wife, Berta (Rosemary Harris), the wisdom of moving out of Germany with their family. She insists they should not be chased away by Hitler, and by the time she thinks otherwise, it's too late for her, her parents, Josef, and the three Weiss children: Karl (James Woods), Rudi (Joseph Bottoms), and Anna (Blanche Baker). *Holocaust* begins with the marriage of Karl to Inga (Meryl Streep), a Christian, an arrangement already frowned upon by the rising Nazi regime in 1935. In time, Karl, a harmless artist, is dragged off to the concentration camp at Buchenwald, leaving Inga vulnerable to a predatory camp officer who passes notes between the husband and wife. Poor young Anna meets a grim fate that reveals something of the way Hitler was determined to eliminate the mentally ill along with Jews, gypsies, homosexuals, and other groups of people. The rebellious Rudi ends up fighting the Germans from a different front, while Josef is deported to Warsaw, eventually joined by Berta. There, *Holocaust* details the plight of the walled-in, so-called Warsaw ghetto, and the despair of the people within. Meanwhile, the destiny of another important character, a rather effete lawyer named Erik Dorf (Michael Moriarty), offers a peek into the internal workings of the Holocaust machinery. Dorf takes a much-needed job as an aide to Reinhard Heydrich (David Warner), Gestapo head and chair of the 1942 Wannsee Conference, which finalized plans for the extermination of European Jews. *Holocaust* was criticized at the time of its broadcast for allegedly cheapening genocide by

shrinking the dimensions of the Nazis' organized evil for commercial television. But as a story free to extend into different aspects of the war on Jews, *Holocaust* is a real eye-opener. Tom Bell, Ian Holm, Robert Stephens, and Sam Wanamaker are also featured in the cast. (Paramount, 1978 / 2008)

Tuesday, Nov. 23, 7:00p-

1978 Feature Film, *Holocaust* (Parts 3-4), 178 mins.

Wednesday, Nov. 24, 7:00p-

1978 Feature Film, *Holocaust* (Part 5), 90 mins.

Monday, Nov. 29, 7:00p-

2001 Feature Film, *Anne Frank*, 189 mins.

This is the incredibly moving complete story of Anne Frank, going beyond what the Jewish teenage girl wrote in her widely read diary. Anne, along with her family and friends of her family, hid in a secret annex behind her father's office in Amsterdam during the Nazi occupation of Holland. She dutifully kept a diary, which became a worldwide bestseller when her father published it in the 1950s. The story has been adapted for television and movies before, but this version, which played on ABC television, moves beyond what Anne wrote, meeting up with the Frank family before Anne receives her diary, and following her past the diary's last entries into Auschwitz and Birkenau. Hannah Taylor Gordon is a superb Anne, bringing to life the multifaceted girl, in turns intelligent, dreamy, creative, spoiled, and bratty, a girl like any other except that Anne is a Jew in Nazi-occupied Holland. The only one who outshines Gordon is Ben Kingsley as Anne's father, Otto Frank. His quiet performance is extraordinarily powerful; as he watches his family slip away, it is impossible not to feel his grief. This brave film is difficult in parts to watch--the concentration camp scenes are brutal--but this is a remarkable adaptation of Anne's life, and it is a film to be shared and discussed and remembered. (Walt Disney Video, 2001)

Tuesday, Nov. 30, 7:00p-

2003 Feature Film, *The Pianist*, 2½ hrs.

Winner of the prestigious Golden Palm award at the 2002 Cannes film festival, *The Pianist* is the film that Roman Polanski was born to direct. A childhood survivor of Nazi-occupied Poland, Polanski was uniquely suited to tell the story of Wladyslaw Szpilman, a Polish Jew and concert pianist (played by Adrien Brody) who witnessed the Nazi invasion of Warsaw, miraculously eluded the Nazi death camps, and survived throughout World War II by hiding among the ruins of the Warsaw ghetto. Unlike any previous dramatization of the Nazi holocaust, *The Pianist* steadfastly maintains its protagonist's singular point of view, allowing Polanski to create an intimate odyssey on an epic wartime scale, drawing a direct parallel between Szpilman's tenacious, primitive

existence and the wholesale destruction of the city he refuses to abandon. Uncompromising in its physical and emotional authenticity, *The Pianist* strikes an ultimate note of hope and soulful purity. As with *Schindler's List*, it's one of the greatest films ever made about humanity's darkest chapter. (Universal Studios, 2003 / 2004)

Tuesday, Jan. 11, 7:00p-

1993 Feature Film, *Schindler's List*, 196 mins.

This Steven Spielberg film is a cinematic masterpiece that has become one of the most honored films of all time. Winner of seven Academy Awards, including Best Picture and Best Director, it also won every major Best Picture award and an exceptional number of additional honors. Among them were seven British Academy Awards; the Best Picture Awards from the New York Film Critics Circle, the National Society of Film Critics, the National Board of Review, the Producers Guild, the Los Angeles Film Critics, the Chicago, Boston and Dallas Film Critics; a Christopher Award; and the Hollywood Foreign Press Association Golden Globe Awards. Steven Spielberg was further honored with the Directors Guild of America Award. The film presents the indelible true story of the enigmatic Oskar Schindler, a member of the Nazi party, womanizer, and war profiteer who saved the lives of more than 1,100 Jews during the Holocaust. It is the triumph of one man who made a difference, and the drama of those who survived one of the darkest chapters in human history because of what he did. Directed by Steven Spielberg, the film, which also won Academy Awards for Screenplay, Cinematography, Music, Editing and Art Direction, stars an acclaimed cast headed by Liam Neeson, Ben Kingsley, Ralph Fiennes, Caroline Goodall, Jonathan Sagalle and Embeth Davidtz. (Universal Studios, 1993 / 2004)

Monday, Jan. 17, 7:00p-

2008 Feature Film, *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas*, 94 mins.

The innocence of childhood savagely collides with the Holocaust in *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas*. Bruno (Asa Butterfield) knows that his father is a soldier and that they have to move to a new house in the country... a house near what he thinks is a farm. But his father isn't just a soldier; he's a high-ranking officer in Hitler's elite SS troops who's just been placed in command of Auschwitz. As Bruno explores the woods around the house, he discovers the concentration camp's perimeter fence. On the other side sits a boy his own age, with whom Bruno strikes up a friendship--a friendship that will have tragic consequences. *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas* is most powerful in the details: The casual brutality of a Nazi lieutenant; the uncomfortable juxtaposition of the family's domestic life with glimpses of the treatment of the imprisoned Jews; a ghastly propaganda film suggesting that life at Auschwitz was like a holiday. But more than anything else, Butterfield's performance makes this film compelling. The young actor perfectly conveys Bruno's limited perspective even as the film carefully unveils the larger, darker reality. The movie's ending will undoubtedly spark arguments, but only because of the emotional complexity of what happens--*The Boy in the Striped Pajamas* is made with great skill and

compassion. Also featuring David Thewlis (*Naked*) and Vera Farmiga (*The Departed*) as Bruno's parents. (Miramax, 2008 / 2009)

Tuesday, Jan. 18, 7:00p-

1961 Feature Film, *Judgment at Nuremberg*, 3 hrs.

Director Stanley Kramer's socially conscious 1961 film tackles the subject of the war crime trials arising out of World War II in an earnest and straightforward fashion, exploring the consciousness of two nations as they struggle to come to terms with the aftermath of the Holocaust. Spencer Tracy plays the American judge selected to head the tribunal that will try the suspected war criminals. As he sets about his task, he must confront the raw emotion felt by the German people, and his own notions of good and evil, right and wrong. Regarded as a classic, this stark rendering of one of the most pivotal events in the 20th century features a stellar cast including Burt Lancaster, Montgomery Clift, Marlene Dietrich, a young William Shatner, and Maximilian Schell, who won an Oscar for his role as counsel for the defense for those charged with crimes against humanity. *Judgment at Nuremberg* is important viewing not only for the history of film, but for the history of modern times. (MGM, 1961 / 2004)

Monday, Jan. 24, 7:00p-

1998 Feature Film, *Left Luggage*, 1½ hrs.

Set in Belgium in the early 70's, *Left Luggage* is the touching and emotional story of Chaja, a rebellious philosophy student struggling to come of age. Her relationship with her parents, both concentration camp survivors, is strained and she finds herself unable to accept her Jewish identity. A family friend finds her a job as a nanny for a Hassidic family with 5 children. Joining forces with Mrs. Kalman (Isabella Rossellini) and through her love for the youngest child who doesn't speak, Chaja learns to accept and respect a culture steeped in traditions, and finds the true value of life. (Fox Lorber, 1998 / 2001)

Tuesday, Jan. 25, 7:00p-

1965 Feature Film, *The Pawnbroker*, 2 hrs.

Based on a novel by Edward Lewis Wallant, this gritty story follows Sol (Rod Steiger in a breakout performance), a lonely camp survivor who has dealt with the destruction of his family by suppressing all emotion and cleaving to the philosophy that nothing matters except money. (His bedridden and dying friend Mendel describes him, to his face, as "the walking dead.") Sol cannot accept the friendship of his assistant, Ortiz (Jaime Sanchez), or of an equally lonely widow (Geraldine Fitzgerald). As the 25th anniversary of his wife's murder approaches, he starts to fall apart, and it becomes clear that what he really wants is to die. The film was considered shocking when first released, both because of its rawness and because of brief nudity. Time has made some of the dramatic touches seem melodramatic--especially the corny "blood on my hands!" final scene. But Steiger's performance is still remarkable, and, even after MTV, the sudden-flashback editing is a

forceful technique. A high point of Sidney Lumet's career. Black and white, with lots of atmospheric trumpets by Quincy Jones. (Republic Pictures, 1965 / 2003)

Monday, Jan. 31, 7:00p-

1982 Feature Film, *Sophie's Choice*, 2½ hrs.

The sunny streets of Brooklyn, just after World War II. A young would-be writer named Stingo (Peter MacNicol) shares a boarding house with beautiful Polish immigrant Sophie (Meryl Streep) and her tempestuous lover, Nathan (Kevin Kline); their friendship changes his life. This adaptation of the bestselling novel by William Styron is faithful to the point of being reverential, which is not always the right way to make a film come to life. But director Alan J. Pakula (*All the President's Men*) provides a steady, intelligent path into the harrowing story of Sophie, whose flashback memories of the horrors of a Nazi concentration camp form the backbone of the movie. Streep's exceptional performance--flawless Polish accent and all--won her an Oscar, and effectively raised the standard for American actresses of her generation. No less impressive is Kevin Kline, in his movie debut, capturing the mercurial moods of the dangerously attractive Nathan. The two worlds of *Sophie's Choice*, nostalgic Brooklyn and monstrous Europe, are beautifully captured by the gifted cinematographer Néstor Almendros. (Lions Gate, 1982 / 1998)

Tuesday, Feb. 1, 7:00p-

Bonus Documentary Film, *Making of 'Sophie's Choice'*, 50 mins.

Monday, March 7, 7:00p-

2005 Documentary Film, *Israel: Birth of a Nation*, 1½ hrs.

Fifty years ago the United Nations passed a resolution which partitioned Palestine into Arab and Jewish states, and the state of Israel was officially born. Dislocated after the turmoil and horrific events of World War II and the Holocaust, hundreds of thousands of Jews streamed into Israel to find peace and safety in their newly declared official homeland. But the area given to the state of Israel was taken at the expense of the Arabs in the region, causing a bitter animosity between these two peoples that continues to the present day. This documentary provides an account and analysis of the formation of the nation of Israel and the trials and tribulations of establishing a Jewish state in Palestine, and the inevitable Arab-Israeli war that followed. (The History Channel, 2005)

Tuesday, March 8, 7:00p-

1960 Feature Film, *Exodus* (Part 1), 2 hrs.

Inspired by Leon Uris' international bestseller, this "extraordinarily moving" (The New Republic) chronicle of the rebirth of a people and the establishment of a nation is the ultimate experience in human drama. Nominated* for three Academy Awards® and winner* for Best Score, *Exodus* is an "exciting, dramatic, scenic, panoramic and deeply

moving" (New York Daily News) masterpiece. Ari Ben Canaan (Paul Newman), a commander of the Israeli underground, manages to lead 600 Jews from the detention camps of Cyprus onto a large freighter bound for Palestine. But British forces soon learn of his plan and insist that he turn back. Undaunted, Ari and his passengers refuse to give up, risking their lives for the greater cause of Israeli independence. (MGM, 1960 / 2002)

Wednesday, March 9, 7:00p-

1960 Feature Film, *Exodus* (Part 2), 1½ hrs.

Monday, March 28, 7:00p-

1998 Documentary Film, *The 50 Years War: Israel and the Arabs* (Part 1), 2½ hrs.

The conflict in the Middle East between Israel and its neighbors is given comprehensive treatment in this two-video set produced by PBS. Using archival footage and extensive interviews with participants, the production begins by explaining conditions in Palestine at the end of World War II and the crisis created by the exodus of European Jews who went to the Middle East after the Holocaust. The withdrawal of the British, who had controlled Palestine for decades, is detailed, as is the creation of the state of Israel. Much of the region's history is complex, with the local struggles being conducted at times as a part of the cold war between the United States and the Soviet Union, but these videos do an admirable job of explaining the complexities of the situation. The segment on the Six Day War, for example, is masterful, with the scenes shifting from Israel to Egypt to Washington to Moscow, the story developing before the viewer's eyes. *The 50 Years War* is often a tale of mistrust and betrayal, but this production strives to present a balanced view of history, and is not only impressive for its command of the facts but for its skillful and often dramatic presentation of history. (PBS, 1998 / 2000)

Tuesday, March 29, 7:00p-

1998 Documentary Film, *The 50 Years War: Israel and the Arabs* (Part 2), 2½ hrs.

Wednesday, March 30, 7:00p-

2002 Feature Film, *The Man in the Glass Booth*, 2 hrs. (+ 20-min bonus documentary interviewing the director)

Maximilian Schell plays Arthur Goldman, a wealthy Jewish industrialist living in a Manhattan high-rise apartment. Goldman is apparently a recluse, who deals with the world through his personal assistant, Charlie (Lawrence Pressman). At first, Arthur seems like a regular guy, albeit expressing outrageous views on Jews and Judaism, but it becomes apparent to the audience that the man has serious issues when he's seen burning the skin under his upper arm with a candle flame. Then, the audience and Charlie are

dumbfounded when an Israeli hit team breaks in, kidnaps Goldman, and carries him off to trial in Israel as a war criminal - a former Nazi concentration camp commandant, Adolph Dorf. Goldman insists pretrial that he be allowed to wear a full SS uniform. For his own protection, then, he faces his accusers as THE MAN IN THE GLASS BOOTH. Bullet-proof glass, that is, considering the emotional volatility of the charges to camp survivors that are present. Schell received Oscar and Golden Globe Best Actor nominations for his depiction of a man so tortured by guilt that he would go to extremes to exorcise it. Personal guilt for having survived the Holocaust; collective Jewish guilt for not having fought back. Taking on the persona of Dorf, Goldman gleefully mocks the Jews for their meekness as they went to slaughter. The sad end to the trial is one of the most emotionally compelling scenes ever produced. (Kino Video, 2002 / 2003)

Tuesday, April 12, 7:00p-
2006 Feature Film, *Munich*, 2½ hrs.

At its core, *Munich* is a straightforward thriller. Based on the book, *Vengeance: The True Story of an Israeli Counter-Terrorist Team*, by George Jonas, it's built on a relatively stock movie premise, the revenge plot: innocent people are killed, the bad guys got away with it, and someone has to make them pay. But director Steven Spielberg uses that as a starting point to delve into complex ethical questions about the cyclic nature of revenge and the moral price of violence. The movie starts with a rush. The opening portrays the kidnapping and murder of Israeli athletes by PLO terrorists at the 1972 Olympics with scenes as heart-stopping and terrifying as the best of any horror movie. After the tragic incident is over and several of the terrorists have gone free, the Israeli government of Golda Meir recruits Avner (Eric Bana) to lead a team of paid-off-the-book agents to hunt down those responsible throughout Europe, and eliminate them one-by-one (in reality, there were several teams). It's physically and emotionally messy work, and conflicts between Avner and his team's handler, Ephraim (Geoffrey Rush), over information Avner doesn't want to provide only make things harder. Soon the work starts to take its toll on Avner, and the deeper moral questions of right and wrong come into play, especially as it becomes clear that Avner is being hunted in return, and that his family's safety may be in jeopardy... the movie as a whole is a profound accomplishment, despite being only "inspired by true events," and not factually based on them. From the ferocious beginning to the unforgettable closing shot, *Munich* works on a visceral level while making a poignant plea for peace, and issuing an unmistakable warning about the destructive cycle of terror and revenge. As one of the characters intones, "There is no peace at the end of this." (Universal Studios, 2006)

Wednesday, April 13, 7:00p-
John Adams opera, *The Death of Klinghoffer*, 2 hrs.

The film opens with the two 'overtures' of equal length - the chorus of exiled Palestinians and the chorus of exiled Jews. The former is accompanied by haunting footage of the Palestinians being driven from their homes in 1948 to make room for the incoming ex-European Jews. The latter plays over equally haunting holocaust footage. The stage is set,

and numerous visual links are created between that introduction and later parts of the opera...this is cinematic opera - not an opera recording...a sobering, prophetic film that takes on so many deeper layers of meaning in the light of September 11, 2001. (London Symphony Orchestra and Chorus, John Adams; Sanford Sylvan, Christopher Maltman, Yvonne Howard, Tom Randle, Kamel Boutros, Leigh Melrose, Emil Marwa [voiced by Susan Bickley], Vivian Tierney, Dean Robinson, Kirsten Blasé, Nuala Willis; Decca, 2003 / 2003)

Tuesday, May 3, 7:00p-

2002 Documentary Film, *Gaza Strip*, 74 mins.

In January of 2001, American director James Longley traveled to the Gaza Strip. His plan was to stay for two weeks to collect preliminary material for a documentary film on the Palestinian Intifada. It was during his stay that Ariel Sharon was elected as Israeli Prime Minister. As violence erupted around him, Longley threw away his return ticket and filmed for the next three months, acquiring nearly 75 hours of footage. *Gaza Strip*, his first feature documentary, is an extraordinary and painful journey into the lives of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip struggling with the day-to-day trials of the Israeli occupation. (Typecast Pictures, 2002)

Wednesday, May 4, 7:00p-

2005 Documentary Film, *Paradise Now*, 90 mins.

Two men, best friends from childhood, are summoned to fulfill their agreement to be suicide bombers for the Palestinian cause. Khaled and Said (Ali Suliman and Kais Nashef, both making striking film debuts) believe fervently in their cause, but having a bomb strapped to your waist would raise doubts in anyone--and once doubts have arisen, they respond in very different ways. *Paradise Now* is gripping enough while the men are preparing for their mission, but when the set-up goes awry and Khaled and Said are separated, it becomes almost excruciatingly tense. The movie passes no judgment on these men; impassioned arguments are made for both sides of the conflict. This is a work of remarkable compassion and insight, given the shape and sharpness of a skillful thriller. Its psychological portrait goes beyond the Palestinian/Israeli conflict and resonates with fanaticism and oppression throughout the world, be it related to a religious, nationalist, or tribal cause. A stunning film from writer/director Hany Abu-Assad. (Warner, 2005)

Tuesday, May 17, 7:00p-

2006 Documentary Film, *Paper Clips*, 84 mins.

Paper Clips is an inspiring 2004 documentary about a consciousness-raising project that blossomed into something beautiful at a rural Tennessee school. When the principal of Whitwell Middle School sought a program that would teach diversity to a predominantly white, Protestant student body, the notion of focusing on the Holocaust--specifically Hitler's extermination of six million Jews--seemed like an obvious way to go. But

understanding what "six million" looks like became a challenge. Thus was born the idea of collecting that number of paper clips at Whitwell as a visual reference.

But then it turned out paper clips actually have, in historical terms, symbolic value where the Holocaust is concerned. In this moving film, one sees Whitwell students dig into research on Germany's genocidal campaign, solicit clips from a variety of leaders and celebrities, and make a name for themselves on the national news. In time, the world comes to Whitwell's doorstep, via unsolicited donations of clips from people around the world, and in a tearful meeting of students and Holocaust survivors. The dimensions of the project, the lessons about prejudice and intolerance, are stunning to watch grow beyond anyone's wildest expectations. (Arts Alliance Amer, 2006)

Wednesday, May 18, 7:00p-

- 1) 2004 Feature Film, *Monsieur Ibrahim*, 95 mins.
- 2) 2006 Film Short, *West Bank Story*, 20 mins.

Monsieur Ibrahim is a fine coming-of-age tale set in 1960's Paris. Young Pierre Boulanger gives a remarkably assured performance as Moses, a Jewish teen living with his cold, skinflint of a dad in a less-than-savory part of town. Abandoned by his mother and living in the shadow of a brother who has himself fled the scene, Moses leads an embittered existence, seeking surcease in the beds of the local prostitutes who ply their trade on the street where he lives. Moses is finally befriended by an aged shopkeeper named Ibrahim Demirdji (Omar Sharif), a Safi Muslim who, after Moses' father commits suicide, adopts the boy and instills in him valuable life lessons, gleaned from his religious training and his long years of experience. Where the film excels is in its tenderhearted view of daily life and in its subtle plea for understanding between Arab and Jew. (Sony, 2004)

West Bank Story is the perfect conclusion to this series which I will allow to speak for itself. (Magnolia, 2006)