Israel's Occupation through the Lens of the Education System

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1126 East 59th Street

Abstract of presentation:
Over the past four decades Israel's occupation of the West Bank, Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem has changed dramatically. Using the Palestinian education system as a case study, Neve Gordon argues that these changes were triggered by a series of contradictions and excesses emanating from the structure of Israel's occupation, and not from the policy choices of military or political leaders. He shows how during the occupation's first two decades Israel attempted to mold the dispositions of the Palestinian students and teachers so as to normalize the occupation. The education system, in other words, became a prime site of management and control (and resistance). Next, he briefly focuses on the Palestinian universities in order to show how Israel's forms of control produced excesses and contradictions that precipitated social unrest and political crisis, leading Israel to change its policies and forms of management in the territories. Finally, he discusses Israel's current approach towards the Palestinian education system. Focusing, once again on the universities, he illustrates how Israel is no longer interested in influencing the aspirations, views and attitudes of the students and teachers, which suggests that the population is no longer conceived as an object that needs to be managed. This does not mean that Israel is no longer interested in continuing the colonization project, but rather that Israel no longer considers the management of the population as a necessary component of the colonizing mission.