

Israel: Politics and Society

Semester I

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Course Description

The course will introduce students to the myriad issues facing Israeli society and the major debates in Israeli politics. It will begin with a brief description of Zionism and the creation of Israel, with emphasis on particular landmarks in Israel's political history. It will further examine Israel's political institutions, electoral system, political parties and their ideologies, social movements, political economy, and non-state actors. A study of the different divisions in Israeli society, along national, ethnic, religious, political, and identity lines will introduce the students to complex and variegated nature of Israeli society. The impact of Arab-Israeli conflict on society relations (Arab-Jewish) and notions of state security will also be addressed.

Course Schedule

Part I. Historical and Political Background

1. Setting of Israeli Politics: Issues of conflict, security, and development
2. Jewish History: Quest for Homeland, Zionism and founding of Israel
3. State Formation and founding of Israeli society
4. The travails of the early state: political, economic, and social development

Part II Political Institutions and Processes

1. Political Parties, the Electoral System and State Institutions
2. Mass mobilisation: Issues and Methods
3. Factors influencing Governance
4. Political Processes and Changes

Part III. Social Divisions

1. The Ethnic Divide: Ashkenazim and Mizrachim
2. The Religious Divide: Secular and Religious Jews
3. The National Divide: Jews and Arabs
4. The Ideological Divide: Zionists and Post-Zionists
5. The Political Divide: Hawks and Doves
6. The Identity Divide: Jews and Israelis

Part IV. Nature of the State and Peace Process

1. Defence and Foreign Policy
2. Impact of Palestinian-Israeli social relations & political culture
3. Notions of state security: Internal and External
4. Wither Peace Process
5. The future of Israel

Select Bibliography:

Books

- Alan Dowty, *The Jewish State: A Century Later* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001)
- Adam Garfinkle, *Politics and Society in Modern Israel*, second edition (NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2000)
- Aamir Mufti and Ella Shohat, eds., *Dangerous Liaisons: Gender, Nation, and Postcolonial Perspectives* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997)
- Clive Jones and Emma C. Murphy, *Israel: Challenges to Identity, Democracy and the State* (London: Routledge, 2002)
- Don Peretz and Gideon Doron, *The Government and Politics of Israel*, third edition. (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1997)
- Baruch Kimmerling, ed., *The Israeli State and Society: Boundaries and Frontiers* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1989)
- Joel S. Migdal, *Through the Lens of Israel: Explorations in State and Society* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2001)
- Michael N. Barnett, ed., *Israel in Comparative Perspective: Challenging the Conventional Wisdom* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1996)
- Ephraim Nimni, ed., *The Challenge of Post-Zionism: Alternatives to Israeli Fundamentalist Politics* (London: Zed Books, 2003)
- Yaron Ezrahi, *Rubber Bullets: Power and Conscience in Modern Israel* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1997)
- Ilan Peleg, ed., *The Middle East Peace Process: Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1998)

Articles

- Alan Dowty, "Is Israel Democratic? Substance and Semantics in the 'Ethnic Democracy' Debate," *Israel Studies*, vol. 4, no. 2 (1999), pp. 1-15
- As'ad Ghanem, Nadim Rouhana and Oren Yiftachel, "Questioning 'Ethnic Democracy': A Response to Sammy Smooha," *Israel Studies*, vol. 3, no. 2 (1998), pp. 253-267
- Avraham B. Yehoshua, "Separating Religion from National Identity," *Palestine-Israel Journal*, vol. 9, no. 1 (2002), pp. 94-101
- Boas Evron, "Israel's Shifting Identity," *Palestine-Israel Journal*, vol. 9, no. 1 (2002), pp. 102-107

- Charles Liebman and Bernard Susser, "Judaism and Jewishness in the Jewish State," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 555 (Jan 1998), pp. 15-25
- Ehud Sprinzak, "Extremism and Violence in Israel: The Crisis of Messianic Politics," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 555 (Jan 1998), pp. 114-126
- Henriette Dahan-Kalev, "You're So Pretty—You Don't Look Moroccan," *Israel Studies*, vol. 6, no. 1 (2001), pp. 1-14
- Ian S. Lustick, "Israel as a non-Arab state: The political implications of mass immigration of non-Jews," *Middle East Journal*, vol. 53, no. 3 (1999), pp. 417-434
- Sami Shalom Chetrit, "Mizrahi Politics in Israel: Between Integration and Alternative," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol. 29, no. 4 (2000), pp. 51-65
- Sammy Smooha, "Ethnic Democracy: Israel as an Archetype," *Israel Studies*, vol. 2, no. 2 (1997), pp. 198-241
- Yoram Hazony, "The Zionist Idea and its Enemies," *Commentary*, vol. 101, no. 5 (1996), pp. 30-38

The students are also encouraged to search for reading material related to politics in Israel on the Internet using popular search engines.

Method of Instruction: Lectures would be held thrice a week. Questions, discussion and debate during classes are strongly encouraged. Students are expected to keep abreast with current events in Israel. *Ha'aretz*, Israel's leading daily newspaper, and, *The Jerusalem Post*, Israel's oldest English-language daily newspaper are available for free on the Internet.

Method of Assessment: A mid-term exam would consist of essay questions based upon the topics covered up to that point. In addition, a term paper addressing an appropriate question and/or issue, submitted on the last day of the class, will form a part of the final assessment.