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Dickinson College
Spring 2009
Dept. of Political Science
Dept. of Judaic Studies

Office hours:
Tuesday and Wednesday @ 4:30-5:15, and by appointment

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Politics, Society and Culture in Israel (PS 290-04/JDST 215-05)

(Denny Hall 211, Tues/Thurs 10:30-11:45)

Course Description

Contrary to what you often read in newspapers, there is far more happening in Israel than war and rocket attacks. Israel has a mature democratic system, a vibrant culture and an increasingly prosperous high-tech economy—as well as a strong sense of ancient and more contemporary history, particularly the Holocaust. Though short in weeks, in this course I aim to provide an overview of the major political, social and cultural events that have shaped, and continue to shape, modern Israel. In politics, we will deal with the origins of the Zionist movement, political leadership, parties and the electoral system, and, to some extent, foreign relations and the Israel-Palestinian issue. We will also cover contemporary Israeli society, focusing on the major divisions in Israeli society, organizations in civil society as well as the impact of the Holocaust and the role of the military. Changing hairstyle and Israeli music will also come under this rubric. In the most general terms, the course is intended to add more nuance and depth to the often one-dimensional portrayal of Israel in the media and provide students with the analytical tools to better understand events in the Middle East.

Required Readings

The following books have been ordered from the Bookstore and should be available for purchase. Other readings will be placed on “Blackboard” or distributed in class. Please sign up and familiarize with Blackboard if this is new to you. Any librarian will be able to help you out.

Gregory S. Mahler, *Politics and Government in Israel: The Maturation of a Modern State* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2004)

Arthur Hertzberg, *The Zionist Idea: A Historical Analysis and Reader* (Jewish Publications, 1997)

Itamar Rabinovich and Jehuda Reinharz (eds.), *Israel in the Middle East: Documents and Readings on Society, Politics and Foreign Relations, pre-1948 to the Present* (Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 2008). **In the syllabus this reading is referred to as “R&R.”**

Course Requirements and Grading

Class sessions will include some lecture, directed class discussions, films and videos. All reading for the week must be completed by class. If there are two classes on a given topic, all the readings must be completed by the second class. At minimum, you should be aware of (1) the question motivating the author; (2) the central argument; (3) the type of evidence used; (3) how the piece fits into the array of other readings.

Attendance is important. I will deduct three points from your final grade for every *unexcused* absence over the second one.

Please let me know as soon as possible if you have a disability that requires specific accommodations.

There will be between two to eight pop quizzes; the number depends on the performance of the class. If it is clear from discussions that the class is reading the assigned reading for each class, there will be fewer of them. The quizzes may be in the form of identifications (who was x, where was y), multiple choice or a very short essay. More than likely you would be asked to state the argument of a reading or readings, and to explain that argument using the evidence from the readings. Pop quizzes cannot be made up if you miss class.

Students will write two analytical research papers on the topics that appear at the end of the syllabus. Each paper should be around 8 pages. You can hand in the papers whenever you wish so long as the last one is NOT on the final day of class. In each paper you should (1) describe what happened/who the person was; (2) discuss the significance to politics, society and culture in Israel (whichever is most relevant); (3) describe a controversy about the event, either among Israeli political rivals, or between Israelis and Arabs. You are NOT allowed to organize the paper according to these evaluation benchmarks. Rather, you are expected to answer these questions in the context of your own narrative account. I expect that each paper will use at least three academic sources (from professional, peer-reviewed journals or books published in respectable academic presses) that are not already in the syllabus. The papers will be graded on the basis of writing (proper grammar, organization, sentence structure, spelling, clarity) as well as on content.

Students must keep up on current events relating to Israel, including daily perusing articles in the *New York Times* and one of two websites:

<http://www.haaretz.com>

<http://www.ynetnews.com>

Students will be assigned to present an article to the class on *one* occasion during the semester. I will pass around a sign-up sheet. Your presentation should briefly summarize the article, explain why you chose it, and attempt to link it to issues covered in class or in the readings.

We will have an in-class mid-term and a take-home final exam.

We will be viewing two feature-length films during the class. Students are required to come these. They will be shown @ 7 PM in Denny Hall, Room 212.

Note and reserve the following dates for the films:

Feb. 19th; March 24th

The final grade will be calculated as follows:

Participation, presentations, in-class assignments: 15%

Pop quizzes (two to eight): 15%

Midterm: 20%

Research Papers: 25%

Final: 25%

*Please note: This syllabus is subject to change depending on changing curricular circumstances, new sources that I become aware of, the availability of guest lecturers, or events on campus.

Class Schedule

Jan. 20: Introduction

No readings

Jan. 22: Basic Facts and Figures

No readings

Jan. 27-29: Ideological and Historical Foundations

Readings:

Mahler, *Politics and Government*, 13-78.

Hertzberg, *Zionist Idea*, 181-198 (Leo Pinsker), 204-223 (Theodor Herzl), 233-241 (Max Nordau), 293-295 (Berdichevski), 369-374 (Gordon), 390-395 (Katzelnelson).

R&R, 41-43 (Jabotinski), 46-48 (George Antonius), 61-63 (UN Resolution 181), 72-74 (Proclamation of the State of Israel).

Feb. 3-5: The Impact of the Holocaust

R&R, 48-55 (White Paper, 1939; Biltmore Program)

Jacob Lassner and S. Ilan Troen, "The Holocaust as Narrative and Politics," in *Jews and Muslims in the Arab World: Haunted by Pasts Real and Imagined*, pp.275-278 (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007) [Blackboard]

Ze'ev Chafets, "Red Toenails and a Blue Tattoo," in *Heroes and Hustlers, Hard Hats and Holy Men*, 89-109. [Blackboard]

S.Y. Agnon, "The Lady and the Peddler," in Robert Alter (ed.), *Modern Hebrew Literature* (New York: Behrman House, 1975). [Blackboard].

Etgar Keret, *Shoes* [Blackboard]

Feb 10-12: Pre-State Institutions and the early-mid 1950s “militarism”

Readings:

R&R, 74-83 (David Ben-Gurion, Memoir on the War of Independence)

Uri Ben-Eliezer, “A Nation-in-Arms: State, Nation, and Militarism in Israel’s Early Years,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 37, no. 2 (1995), 264-285 [Blackboard, JSTOR, Proquest]

Benjamin and Iddo Netanyahu (eds), *Portrait of Hero: The Letters of Jonathan Netanyahu*, [Blackboard].

Feb. 17-19: Elites

Readings:

Mahler, *Politics and Government*, 223-227.

David Nachmias, “Israel’s Bureaucratic Elite: Social Structure and Patronage,” *Public Administration Review* 51, no 5 (1991), 413-420. [Blackboard]

Yoram Peri, “Ideological Portrait of the Israeli Military Elite,” *The Jerusalem Quarterly*, no. 3 (1977), 28-40. [Blackboard]

Daniel Maman, “The Elite Structure in Israel: A Socio-Historical Analysis,” *Journal of Political and Military Sociology* 25, no. 1 (1997), 25-46) [Blackboard]

****Film on Feb. 19th: Sallah (1964). Film will be in Denny, 212.**

Feb 24-26: The Kibbutz and its Transformation

Jacob Lassner and S. Ilan Troen, “Return, Reclaim, Reconstitute,” in *Jews and Muslims in the Arab World*, 283-323 [Blackboard]

Henry Near, "The Crisis in the Kibbutz Movement, 1949-1961," in S. Ilan Troen and Noah Lucas, eds., *Israel: The First Decade of Independence* (Albany, 1995), 243-264 [Blackboard]

Please browse the kibbutz movement website: <http://www.kibbutz.org.il>. Using the internet, find a kibbutz (there are roughly 200) and be prepared to discuss when it was founded, by whom, and what they do for a living.

March 3: Review Session

March 5: Midterm

March 17-19: Israeli Democracy, Parties, and Voting Patterns

Readings:

Mahler, *Politics and Government*, 141-202, 207-215.

Sammy Smootha, "Ethnic Democracy: Israel as an Archetype," *Israel Studies* 2, no. 2, 198-212 [Blackboard]

R&R, 315-330 (The 1981 Elections)

March 24: The Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) and Society

Readings:

Mahler, *Politics and Government*, 235-237.

Gabriel Ben-Dor and Ami Pedahzur, "Civil-Military Relations in Israel at the Outset of the 21st Century," in Uzi Rebhum and Chaim Waxman (eds.), *Jews in Israel: Contemporary Social and Cultural Patterns* (Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 2007), 331-342 [Blackboard]

R&R, 109-113 (Moshe Dayan), 287-295 (Hanna Herzog), 399-402 (Ariel Sharon), 517-18 (Withdrawal from Lebanon), 450-452 (Alice Miller v. Minister of Defense)

Eyal Ben-Ari, "Tests of Soldierhood, Trials of Manhood: Military Service and Male Ideals in Israel," in Daniel Maman, Eyal Ben-Ari and Zeev Rosenhek (eds.), *Military, State, and Society in Israel* (New Brunswick: Transaction), 239-264 [Blackboard].

****Film on March 24: "Late Summer Blues" (1987). The film will be shown in Denny 212.**

March 26: Library Instruction: Locating Sources in Middle East Politics. Meet at the Information Commons Classroom on the lower level of the library.

March 31-April 2: Civil Religion in Israel: The Symbolic Dimension of Nationalism

Readings:

Yael Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots: Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 39-47, 147-160, 167-177 [Blackboard].

Charles Liebman and Eliezer Don-Yehiya, *Civil Religion in Israel: Traditional Judaism and Political Culture in the Jewish State* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1983), Ch. 4 [Blackboard]

April 7:

Readings: **Hairstyles, or, why it's cool for guys to go bald**

Oz Almog, "From *Blorit* to Ponytail: Israeli Culture Reflected in Changing Hairstyles," *Israel Studies* 8, no. 2, 82-117 [Blackboard]

April 9: NO CLASS (Passover)

April 14-16: Counter-Currents

Reading:

Yaron Ezrachi, "Women as Agents of the Anti-Epic," in *Rubber Bullets: Power and Conscience in Modern Israel* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1997). [Blackboard]

Students, working in groups of 4, will choose among the following protest groups and prepare a class presentation (using PowerPoint or not) about their membership, objectives, and the extent to which they are successful: The Movement for Quality Government, Yesh Gvul, Black Panthers, Three Mothers, Gisha, B'Tselem. Each presentation will be posted on Blackboard in the Digital Drop Box.

April 21-23: Politics and Culture in Music

Readings:

Motti Regev and Edwin Seroussi, *Popular Music and National Culture in Israel* (Berkeley: University of California, 2004), Chapter 2 (Introduction), 3 ("Land of Israel" music), 7 (Rock) and pages 161-162, 165-171 [Blackboard]

Scott Streiner, "Shooting and Crying: The Emergence of Protest in Israeli Popular Music," *The European Legacy, Towards New Paradigms: Journal of the International Society for the Study of Europe* 6, 6 (2001), 771-792 [Blackboard]

David Grossman/Dag Nahash, "The Sticker Song" (Search on "YouTube"). Lyrics are posted on Blackboard.

April 28: Foreign Affairs and the Israel-Palestinian Conflict

Readings:

Mahler, *Politics and Government in Israel*, 251-318.

R&R, 423-427 (Hezbollah Program), 430-437 (Hamas Covenant), 544-546 (Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Speech to the World without Zionism Conference).

April 30: Summing Up

List of Research Paper Topics:

The Altalena Affair, The Entebbe Operation, the Lavon Affair, "Rotation Government," Justice Aharon Barak, Reparations from Germany (1950-1), the War of Attrition, the "Who is a Jew" debate, Shas, "The Banality of Evil," Eli Geva, Fatah Tanzim, Koor, Al-Aqsa Intifada, Aharon Abuhatzera, ISCAR, Yosef Lapid, Rehavam Ze'evi, Sabra and Shatilla, the Sinai Campaign (1956), Yigal Amir, David Grossman, Sayeret Matkal, Yad Labanim.