

Why Israel Matters

Exploring the Place of Israel in American Jewish Life

Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion
Dr. Lisa D. Grant and Dr. Jonathan Krasner
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 12:20 – 1:40 pm

Course Overview

This course will engage us in a process of reflecting on the significance of Israel in American Jewish life. As we explore the historical and contemporary relationship of American Jewry to Israel, we will analyze how Israel has been and is being taught, as well develop a strategic vision for why and how we should teach Israel from the pulpit, at camps, in the classroom and other settings where Jews gather to learn.

The course is organized around four overlapping spheres of how we understand and relate to Israel – *Am, Eretz, Torah, and Medinah*. We will use primary sources, scholarly articles, literature, film, visual images, music to consider these four closely related conceptions of Israel as a sacred symbol and a living polity. Each class session is intended to highlight the tensions between the idealized vision and complex, dynamic, and always challenging reality that shape our understandings and connections to Israel. We will also explore how the teaching of Israel has evolved over time to reflect the changing climate. Throughout the course, we will leave time to address questions of personal meaning and how to bring the ideas home in terms of various forms of teaching about Israel.

Course Information:

- Class: Tuesday and Thursday, 12:20-1:40 pm
- Room 509
- Office Hours
Dr. Grant – by appointment – 212-824-2231; lgrant54@gmail.com
Dr. Krasner – by appointment – 978-257-1272; jkrasner@huc.edu

In-Class Computer Use: We trust that students who use laptop computers in class will restrict their computer usage to course related activities only (note taking and electronic resources, as appropriate).

Key assumptions underlying the course:

1. Israel is integral to Judaism and the collective Jewish experience wherever it is lived.
2. This does not preclude a range of different personal commitments and connections.

3. Your own knowledge, opinions, and assumptions will be stretched by listening carefully to and at times arguing with the multiple voices expressed through the readings and conversations and writings we produce in class.

Core Text: **Rebhun, Uzi and Waxman, Chaim I. editors. *Jews in Israel: Contemporary social and cultural patterns*. Hanover: Brandeis University Press. 2004.

Readings preceded by an asterisk () are available on-line, or in pdf files posted on Sakai. All other readings are in the course packet.*

Unit 1: Am Yisrael – Jewish Peoplehood and Identity

Jan. 15: Why Israel Matters – Introduction and Overview

Land of Promise (film)

Salkin, Jeffrey. (2007). *I Dream of Zion. (selections)*. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Press.

Jan. 20: Living in Two Worlds – The Nature of Jewish Existence

Bialik, Hayim Nachman. "Jewish Dualism." In *Revelment and concealment: Five essays*. Ibis (1st Editions). 2000, 22-44.

*Rawidowicz E. Simon, "Israel The Ever-Dying People," and "Jerusalem and Babylon," *State of Israel, Diaspora, and Jewish Continuity*, 53-64, 229-239.

*Cohen, Steven M. (2006). Whatever happened to the Jewish people?
Commentary 121:6, 33-37.

Music: Yerushalyaim Shel Zahav (Naomi Shemer) v. The Zionist Hip Hop (Hadag Nachash); Ilanot (Leah Goldberg/Achinoam Nini) Sitting on the Fence (Arik Einstein); Sitting in the Café (Teapacks)

Exercise: Peoplehood maps

Jan.22: Israel and the Diaspora

Sarna, Jonathan. "A Projection of America as it ought to be: Zion in the mind's eye of American Jews." In Allon Gal, ed. *Envisioning Israel: The Changing Ideals and Images of North American Jews*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press. 1996: 41-69.

Israel at 60: Rethinking the partnership between Israel and world Jewry, Donniel Hartman (based on the address Rabbi Hartman delivered at the 2007 URJ Biennial in San Diego, distributed by ARZA)

http://www.arza.org/_kd/Items/actions.cfm?action=Show&item_id=1382&destination=ShowItem

Visual representations of Israel over time in American text books

Recommended reading: Elazar Daniel (2001) “Changing Places, Changing Cultures: Divergent Jewish Political Cultures,” In Deborah Dash Moore and S. Ilan Troen, *Divergent Jewish Cultures*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 319-331.

Jan. 27: *Israel as Center?*

Guest Speaker: Steven M. Cohen

Gorny, Yosef. “*Shlilat Ha-Galut: Past and Present*” and Sarna, Jonathan, “Response: The Question of *shlilat Ha-Galut* in American Zionism.” In Allon Gal and Alfred Gottschalk, eds. *Beyond Survival and Philanthropy: American Jewry and Israel*. Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press (2000). 41-63.

Halkin, Hillel, (2007) “The Only Game in Town: Is there a Future to American Jewry?” in *Eretz Acheret— Israeli Democracy: A Coalition of Fantasies*, 20-25.

*Cohen, Steven, M. and Kelman, Ari. (2007). *Beyond Distancing: Young Adults Jews and Their Relationship to Israel*. The Jewish Identity Project of Reboot Andrea and Charles Bronfman Philanthropies

Jan. 29 – *Israel Education in America, Philosophical Foundations*

Eisen, A. M. and Rosenak, M. (1997). *Teaching Israel: Basic Issues and Philosophical Guidelines*, in *Israel in our Lives*. Jerusalem: The Joint Authority for Jewish-Zionist Education.

Ackerman, Walter (1996). “Israel in American Jewish Education,” in Allon Gal, ed. *Envisioning Israel: The Changing Ideals and Images of North American Jews*. Jerusalem and Detroit: The Magnes Press and Wayne State University Press, pp. 173-190.

Recommended Reading: *Boyd, Jonathan and Moskovitz-Kalman (2004). *The Philosopher’s Retreat: Exploring the Place of Israel in the Lives of American Jews*. North American Coalition for Israel Education.

Feb. 3: *Film “Eyes Wide Open”*

Unit 2: Eretz Yisrael: Competing Narratives of Space and Place

February 5: Zionism Then

Hertzberg, Arthur. *The Zionist Idea: A historical analysis and reader*. Philadelphia: JPS Press, 1997.

- a. Leo Pinsker: 181-198
- b. Theodor Herzl: 204-223
- d. Ahad Ha'am: 260-277
- e. A.D. Gordon: 371-379

February 10: Zionism Now

Leah Shakdiel, "The Second Zionist Revolution" (263-267); Amos Elon, "Israel and the End of Zionism" (300-307); Eliezer Schweid, "The Goals of Zionism Today (332-341) in Carol Diamant, ed. (1998). *Zionism: The Sequel*. New York: Hadassah, The Women's Zionist Organization of America, Inc.

Land of the Settlers, Haim Yavin Film

Feb. 12: Founding Myths, Grounding Realities

Yael Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots: Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995: 39-47

Oz Almog, *The Sabra: The Creation of the New Jew* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 23-72, 138-159.

February 17: Israel Curriculum Classic Paradigms

Samuel Dinin, "The Role of Israel in American Jewish Education," *Jewish Education* 38:3, (1968), 6-11

Schiff, Alvin, "Israel in American Jewish Schools" and Blumenfeld, Samuel M., "Israel and Jewish Education in the Diaspora," *Jewish Education*, Vol. 38:4, (1968), 6-29.

Sara Feinstein, "The Challenge of Israel," *Jewish Education* 39:4, (1969), 50-52.

Miller, Israel et al. (1984) *Jewish Education Vol. 52:4*. Symposium on the Teaching of Zionism and Israel, pp. 4-14.

Ariav, Tamar (1988). "Curriculum Change in the Teaching of Israel," and Glatzer, Shoshana, "Developing a Curriculum for Teaching Israel" *Pedagogic Reporter*, 39:1, 8-16

February 19: Israel Curriculum New Directions

Jewish Educational Leadership, Vol. 7:1, Fall 2008, Israel: The Dream Meets Reality – Articles by Lisa D. Grant, 22-27; Steve Israel, 33-36; Francis Nataf, 45-48; and Susan Handelman, 49-53.

*Ariel, Jonathan (2006). From Herzl to Herliza – Notes Towards Recasting Israel Education, in David Breakstone and Ariel Feldstein, *From Altneuland to Tel Aviv: Dreams and Deeds*. The Zionist Library, 1-9

*Bar-On, Dan and Adwan, Sami. (2006). “The Prime Shared History Project” in *Educating Toward a Culture of Peace*, Yaacov Iram, Hillel Wahrman, Zehavit Gross, editors. IAP. 309-323.

Recommend reading: *Kopelowitz, Ezra, Towards what ideal do we strive? A portrait of social and symbolic Israel engagement in community day schools, RAVSAK Report, 2005.

February 24: Arab Citizens in Israeli Society

*Dowty, Alan (2001). “A Question that outweighs all others: Yitzhak Epstein and Zionist Recognition of the Arab Issue.” *Israel Studies* 6.1, 34-54.

Smooha, Sammy. “Arab-Jewish Relations in Israel: A Deeply Divided Society.” In Anita Shapira, ed. *Israeli Identity in Transition*. Westport: Praeger, 2004: 31-68.

Jamal, Amal. (2007). “We demand to be full partners: Israeli democracy as viewed by an Arab political scientist.” in *Eretz Acheret– Israeli Democracy: A Coalition of Fantasies*, pp.58-65.

Feb. 26: Yom Iyun – No class

Unit 3: Torat Yisrael - Jewish tradition and culture; religious/secular divides; Progressive Judaism

March 3: The Many Kippot in Israeli Society/ Blurred Boundaries – Israeli Jews and Jewish Israelis

**Levy, Shlomit, “The many faces of Jewishness in Israel” in Rebhun and Waxman, pp. 265-284.

Goodman, Micha, (2007). “Hillel the Elder Meets Ahad Ha’am: Secular and Orthodox Converge in the Beit Midrash” in *Eretz Acheret– Israeli Democracy: A Coalition of Fantasies*. 14-19.

Efron, Noah, *Real Jews: Secular Versus Ultra-Orthodox: The Struggle for Jewish Identity in Israel* (Basic Books, 2003), 142-168.

Film clip: ‘The Transparent Kippah’ from the ‘Did Herzl Really Say That’ series
Poetry: Yitzhak Shalev ‘What I did not get from Siddurim and Machzorim’; Amichai:

March 5: Innovations in Israel Education
Guest Speaker: Reuven Greenvald, MAKOM

Readings TBA

March 10: Reform Zionism

Marmor, Dow. ‘Reform Zionism in the Postmodern Age’ *Journal of Reform Zionism*, Vol 1, No. 1, March 1993. pp. 14-18.

Borowitz, Eugene. ‘What is Reform Religious Zionism?’ *Journal of Reform Zionism*, Vol. II, March 1995. 24-30.

Marmor, Michael. (2007). ‘Happiness inside the State: Towards a Liberal Theology of Israel.’ *CCAR Journal*, LIV/II. 84-9.

Meyer, Michael Meyer (2007). ‘Towards a Reform Jewish Vision for Zion,’ *CCAR Journal*, LIV/II. 98-112.

An Open Conversation about Reform Zionism by ARZA:
<http://www.reformzionism.net/>

March 12: Israel Education in Reform Settings
Guest Speaker: Anna Kislanski

*Chazan, Barry (2005), ‘Schechter’s Lament: Israel and Jewish Education Once Again.’ *Agenda: Jewish Education* 18.

*Grant, Lisa D. ‘Israel Education in Reform Congregational Schools.’ *CCAR Journal* (Summer, 2007).

March 17: The Israel Trip

Goldberg, Harvey. (2002). ‘A Summer on a NFTY Safari,’ in Harvey Goldberg, Samuel Heilman, and Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *The Israel Experience: Studies in Jewish Identity and Youth Culture*. Jerusalem: The Charles and Andrea Bronfman Philanthropies, 36-59.

Saxe, Leonard. (2008). Connecting Diaspora Young Adults to Israel: Lessons from Taglit Birthright Israel.

<http://ir.brandeis.edu/bitstream/handle/10192/22980/Herzilya.0221081.pdf?sequence=1>

Chazan, Barry and Saxe, Leonard (2008). *Ten Days of Birthright Israel: A Journey in Young Adult Identity*. Brandeis University Press, 94-144.

See also: Birthright unplugged website - <http://www.birthrightunplugged.org/>

Unit 4: Medinat Yisrael – Statehood and Society

March 19: Fully Jewish, Fully Human

A. B. Yehoshua (plus respondents) “The Zionist Revolution: Is it still continuing?”
CCAR Journal (Spring 2007), 123-145.

March 24: Cultural Plurality in a Jewish State

**Smooha, Sammy, “Jewish ethnicity in Israel: symbolic or real?” in Rebhun and Waxman, pp. 47-80

**Kaplan, Steven and Salamon, Hagar, “Ethiopian Jews in Israel: a part of the people or apart from the people?” in Rebhun and Waxman, pp. 118- 148.

Shapira, Dan. (2007). “Don’t be Afraid of us “Russians”: Inside wer’re white and furry.”
in *Eretz Acheret– Israeli Democracy: A Coalition of Fantasies*. 47-57.

Film clips from: Sallah Shabbati and Under the Donim Tree

Poetry: Alterman, “Danino’s Race”; Erez Biton, “Synopsis of a Conversation”; Balfour Hakak, “Galut”

March 26: The Invention of Tradition: Commemorating National Holidays: Yom Hashoah, Yom Hazikaron and Yom Ha’atzmaut

**Rebhun and Waxman, PRT V: Civil Commitment and Collective Memory,
pp. 331-417

Music: “Ashes and Dust” Yehuda Poliker, “Horef Shivim v’Shalosh”, “Numbers”
HaDag Nachash,
Poetry: Leah Aini “Survivor”

March 31: Israel as a Democratic and Jewish State

“The Future Vision of the Palestinian Arabs in Israel Report,” *The National Committee for the Heads of the Arab Local Authorities in Israel*, 12 January 2007
<http://www.adalah.org/newsletter/eng/dec06/tasawor-mostaqbali.pdf>

David Green, “The Other Israelis,” *Boston Globe*, February 25, 2007
http://www.boston.com/news/globe/ideas/articles/2007/02/25/the_other_israelis/

Eretz Acheret, *Israeli Democracy: A Coalition of Fantasies*, Autumn 2007 – Ditta Gary, “The big orchard and the small orchard, 8-15; Edna Elimelech, I’m not retarded – just poor” 28-33; Yair Sheleg, “The tragedy of the knitted skullcaps”, 64-71

April 2: The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

*Israel's Declaration of Independence and the Palestinian National Charter.

*Mahmoud Darwish, "The Palestinian People's Appeal on the 50th Anniversary of the Nakba" (1998)

“Lemon Tree” Finds Friendship Amid Mideast Conflict. *All Things Considered*: June 4, 2006
<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5449840>

Music: Chava Alberstein: *Had Gadya, Zeh Hayah Beyti*

April 7-16: No class, Pesach Break

April 21: Film: Encounter Point

April 23, and 28

Student Presentations: Teaching Israel- Personal and Theoretical Perspectives.

Assignments:

1. Students will choose two of the four units of study to write a critical analysis of the readings and classroom discussions and personal reflection on the content and experiences. Each of these two papers should be 5-7 pages in length.

Before handing it in, each student will give his or her paper to a fellow student to read, raise questions and comment upon. When the student-reader returns the paper, the original writer will prepare a one-page reflection on how the peer comments received helped them expand their thinking about the unit.

Thus, students will post on Sakai: (1) a 5-7 page paper; that includes (2) peer review comments; and (3) a your one-page reflection on the peer's review. Plan to give your paper to your peer reviewer at least one week before the due date to allow for time for comment and reflection. Final due dates for posting each unit: **Unit 1: 2/12, Unit 2: 3/10, Unit 3: 3/26, Unit 4: 4/23**

2. Prepare a detailed outline of a 4-6 session high school, college, or adult education program, including a 2-3 page rationale, Enduring Understandings and Essential Questions for the Unit, topic headings, core concepts, and essential questions for each lesson, and a listing of resources and proposed activities. **Due 5/8/09**