

Pol 216- J:  
**Israel in the Middle East: Politics and Society**  
Spring 2009

Professor Alan Holiman  
Office Hours: MTWTh 8:00 – 9:00 a.m. or by appointment  
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**Course Description:**

This course introduces students to the politics and social system of Israel in ways that can contribute to important debates in comparative politics and political philosophy. The course is divided into three parts. The first part sets Israeli politics in the rich context of religious faith, the political movements, crucial events, and the diverse social groups that created the state of Israel. The second part of the course maps the contours of Israeli domestic politics focusing on the main political institutions, the key political actors, and the general features of Israeli public policy. The third part of the course deals with challenges common to both the US and Israel: combating terrorism and dangerous forms of religious fundamentalism, the meaning of citizenship and national identity, and the nature of democracy in complex, divided, and dynamic societies. What this course is *not* is a course solely devoted either to the history and politics of Israel, or to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. With respect to the former, it is a comparative politics course, which examines the Israeli case in detail; with respect to the latter, while one cannot study Israeli politics without encountering the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, neither can one reduce Israeli politics to it.

**Course Objectives:**

The course has four main objectives:

- To enable students to understand the basic historical, philosophical, and cultural matrix that produced the state of Israel and the socio-political forces that drive Israeli politics and society today
- To enable students to understand the structure and workings of Israel's political system
- To enable students to understand the major challenges facing the state of Israel domestically and internationally
- To enable students to become more informed and critical consumers of news and information about Israel and the Middle East

**Required Texts:**

The following texts are for the course and are available in paperback at the College Bookstore in the Yates Union.

**Required:**

- Norman Solomon, *Judaism: a Very Short Introduction* (Oxford U Press, 2000)
- Asher Arian, *Politics in Israel: The Second Republic* (CQ Press, 2005)
- Donna Rosenthal, *The Israelis: Ordinary People in an Extraordinary Land* (Free Press, 2003)
- Sandy Tolan, *The Lemon Tree: An Arab, a Jew, and the Heart of the Middle East* (Bloomsbury USA, 2007)
- Supplementary articles and documents as assigned

**Films:**

The following films will be shown in this course and/or will be available for viewing on the college's video server:

- *Tkumah (episodes 1-6) (1990s, IBA documentary about Israeli history & society)*
- *Pillar of Fire (several episodes) (1980s, IBA documentary about the creation of Israel)*
- *My Brother's Wedding (US documentary film)*
- *The Inner Tour (documentary)*
- *Checkpoint (documentary)*
- *Paradise Now (French-Palestinian-Israeli feature film)*
- *As If Nothing Happened (Israeli feature film)*
- *The Cult of the Suicide Bomber (US documentary)*
- *Death in Gaza (HBO documentary)*
- *Kadosh (Israeli feature film)*
- *Time of Favor (Israeli feature film)*
- *Walk on Water (Israeli feature film)*
- *Schindler's List (US Oscar-winning feature film)*

**Attendance Policy:** Students are expected to attend all class sessions and to come to class having done the assigned readings. The instructor reserves the right to give pop-quizzes on the readings at any time. Excessive absences are noticed and will have an adverse effect on a student's grade. Students who arrive habitually late interrupt the class and are discourteous to their colleagues. So, be ON TIME for class sessions.

**Technology Policy:** Please be so kind as to deactivate cell phones, pagers, and other noise-making electronic devices prior to coming to class or come to class without them.

**Academic Integrity:** It is expected that all papers submitted to meet course requirements will be entirely the work of the student in question. Plagiarism is "the use of ideas, words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs, etc., taken from other sources without acknowledging the original source. It is intellectual theft and will be treated seriously in this course."<sup>1</sup> Depending upon the nature of the offense, plagiarism can result in the

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<sup>1</sup> I borrowed this definition of plagiarism from one of Dr. Armstrong's old syllabi, so: *Go ye, therefore, and do likewise...*

failure of the assignment in question and possibly the course. It will certainly be reported to the Dean's Office for disciplinary action. An important secret to avoid plagiarism is to do your work before the last minute.

**Withdrawal Policy:** You may withdraw from this course at any time until the last day of classes.

**Special Accommodations:** If a student in the class has any special medical or other challenges that require special accommodation, please make this known to the instructor immediately. The standard college policies will apply.

**Late Submission of Written Assignments:** Assignments will be due at the beginning of class. An assignment presented later that day will be docked one letter grade, and an additional letter grade for each day thereafter. Printer problems, computer problems, "dog or roommate ate my paper" problems are no excuse. Make certain that your work is ready to be presented when due.

**Absences on Exam Days:** Exam days are special events in this class. You are expected to be present. An unexcused absence on exam day will result in a zero for the exam in question. If a student is absent due to illness on that day, the instructor will expect to see a legible letter on official letterhead from a physician confirming that the student missed the exam due to illness or hospitalization. If a student will be absent due to an official College event, then the instructor requires the student to present a written request for accommodation from a faculty sponsor no later than one week prior to the exam before a makeup exam will be permitted.

### **Grading Policy:**

Your grade in this course will be based on the following:

- Quizzes (Map quiz/Judaism quiz) 10%
- Book Review/Presentation 20%
- Comparative Film Review 20%
- Mid-term Examination 25%
- Final Examination (comprehensive) 25%

### **Schedule of Assignments**

#### **Part I: Who Are the Jews? Faith, History, and the Birth of Modern Israel**

**Week One:** "In the Beginning: Faith and Religion"

Required reading:

- Solomon, *Judaism: a Very Short Introduction* (entire book)

Recommended viewing:

- *Pillar of Fire*, episode 1

**Week Two: “Zionism and the Reasons for Modern Israel”**(Quiz on Basic Beliefs of Judaism)

Required reading:

- Document: The Declaration of Independence of the State of Israel (distributed in class)
- (on e-reserve) Selections on Political Zionism from Arthur Hertzberg, *The Zionist Idea*:

Leo Pinsker, pp. 181-198

Theodor Herzl, pp. 204-223

David Ben-Gurion, pp. 605-619

Recommended reading and viewing:

- Max Nordau, pp. 233-245
- Chaim Weizman, pp. 573-588
- *Pillar of Fire*, episode 2

**Week Three: “The Creation of the State of Israel”**

Required reading:

- Rosenthal, Ch. 1: “One of the World’s Most Volatile Neighborhoods”
- Arian, Introduction
- Document: The Law of Return (1950) (distributed in class)

Recommended viewing:

- (on video server) Documentary: *Pillar of Fire*, episodes 4, 6, 7

(Map Quiz---Israel and the Middle East)**Week Four: “The Socio-Economic Context of Israeli Politics”**

Required reading for Tuesday:

- Rosenthal:  
Ch. 2, “Dating and Mating Israeli-Style”  
Ch. 3, “A People’s Army”

Required viewing: (on video server) *Tkumah*: episode 3: “The People’s Army”

Required reading for Thursday:

- Rosenthal, Ch. 4, “Swords into Stock Shares”
- Required viewing: (on video server) *Tkumah*, episode 5: “The Economic Revolution”

Recommended reading:

- Rosenthal, Ch. 16, “Marriage, Polygamy, Adultery, and Divorce Israeli-Style”
- Rosenthal, Ch. 17, “Oy! Gay?”
- Rosenthal, Ch. 19, “Hookers and Hash in the Holy Land”

**Week Five:** “The Tectonic Plates of Politics: Who Exactly Are the Israelis?”

Required reading for Tuesday:

- Arian, Ch. 2
- Rosenthal:  
Ch. 5, “The Ashkenazim: Israel’s WASPS”  
Ch. 6, “The Mizrahim: The Other Israelis”  
Ch. 7, “The Russians: The New Exodus”

Recommended reading for Tuesday:

- Rosenthal: Ch. 8, “Out of Africa: Ethiopian Israelis in the Promised Land”

Required reading for Thursday:

- Document: The Status Quo Agreement of 1947 (distributed in class)
- Rosenthal:  
Ch. 9, “The Haredim: Jewish-JEWISH-JEWISH!”  
Ch. 10: “The Orthodox: This Land Is Your Land? This Land Is My Land!”  
Ch. 11, “The Non-Orthodox: War of the Cheeseburgers”  
Ch. 12, “The Muslims: Abraham’s Other Children”

Required viewing for Thursday:

- FILM on Video Server: *My Brother’s Wedding* (36 minutes)
- (on video server): *Tkumah*, episode 2: “The Ingathering”

Recommended reading for Thursday:

- Rosenthal:  
Ch. 13, “The Bedouin: Tribes, Tents, and Satellite Dishes” (see next page)  
Ch. 14, “The Druze: Between Modernity and Tradition”  
Ch. 15, “The Christians: Uneasy in the Land of Jesus”

**Week Six:** Mid-term Examination (comprehensive to date—plus map quiz)

**Part II:** *The Structure and Context of Power and Politics*

*NOTE: You should begin reading the book, “The Lemon Tree,” this week.*

**Week Six (continued):** “Legislative, Executive, and Judicial Institutions”

Required reading for Thursday:

- Arian, Ch. 9

Recommended reading for Thursday:

- Arian, Ch. 11

**Week Seven:**

*NOTE: You should be reading “The Lemon Tree.”*

Topic One: “Parties and the Electoral Process”

Required reading for Tuesday:

- Arian, Chs. 5, 7, 10

Topic Two: “Interest Groups, Trends in Israeli Political Culture”

Required reading for Thursday:

- Arian, Chs. 10, 12

### **Part III: A Volatile Neighborhood: Challenges and Threats to the State of Israel**

*NOTE: You should be reading the book, “The Lemon Tree,” this week.*

**Week Eight:** “The Palestinians, the West Bank, Gaza and Jerusalem”

Required reading:

- Document (distributed in class): UN Resolution #242 (1967)
- Other reading: TBA
- (on reserve) Michael Oren, *Six Days of War: June 1967 and the Making of the Modern Middle East*, pp. 305-331:  
“Aftershock: Tallies, Postmortems, and the Old/New Middle East”  
“Afterward”

Required Viewing: (on video server) *Tkumah*, episode 1: “The Conflict”

Recommended reading:

- (on reserve) Michael Oren, *Six Days of War: June 1967 and the Making of the Modern Middle East*, chapters on the capture of East Jerusalem by Israeli forces:  
“Day Two”  
“Day Three”  
“Day Four”

### **SPRING BREAK!!!**

**\*\*\*Week Nine:** “The Lemon Tree”

Required assignments:

- **Book Review** DUE AT BEGINNING OF CLASS on Tuesday.
- Assignment: **Group presentations**  
The Life of the Khairi Family  
The Life of the Eshkenazi Family  
Class Discussion

Recommended viewing: (on video server)

- (documentary: *The Inner Tour*)

**Week Ten:** “Israeli-Palestinian Negotiations and the Challenge of Peace-Making”

Required reading:

- Reading: TBA
- Document (distributed in class): Israel-PLO Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements (September 13, 1993)
- Document (distributed in class): Agreed Minutes to the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements

- Document (distributed in class): PLO Executive Council Statement on the Intifada (August 1988)
- Document (distributed in class): Speech of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin to Peace Rally (November 4, 1995)

Recommended viewing: (on video server):  
*Checkpoint* (Israeli documentary)

**Week Twelve:** “Target Israel: a Democracy Copes with Terrorism...or Worse”

*NOTE: Two Evening FILM Showings This Week---Paradise Now and As If Nothing Happened*

Time: TBA

(Both of these feature films deal with the issue of suicide bombings in Israel, one from the perspective of the perpetrators and the other from the perspective of the victims. The films will be available for viewing at two evening showings and on the campus video server.)

**Assignment: Comparative Film Review** (guidelines will be distributed in class and the due date announced.)

For Class Sessions This Week:

Topic for Tuesday: *The Islamic Republic of Iran and Hezbollah*

Required reading:

- (on reserve) Richard Augustus Norton, *Hezbollah: A Short History (2007)*, Chs. 2, 4, 6

Required viewing:

- (on video server) FILM: *The Cult of the Suicide Bomber* (90 min.)

Topic for Thursday: *Hamas*

Required reading:

- (on reserve) Khaled Hroub, *HAMAS: A Beginner's Guide (2006)*, Chs. 2-6
- Document (distributed in class): The Hamas Charter (August 1988)

Required viewing:

- (on video server) FILM: *Death in Gaza* (80 min.)

**Week Thirteen:** “Bound for the Promised Land?”

Topic for Tuesday: *Israel---Jewish and/or Democratic?*

Required reading:

- (on reserve) A. Dowty, “Is Israel Democratic? Substance and Semantics in the ‘Ethnic Democracy’ Debate,” in *Israel Studies*, 4:2, Fall 1999
- (on reserve) R. Gavison, “A Rejoinder to the ‘Ethnic Democracy’ Debate,” in *Israel Studies*, 4:1, Spring 1999.
- (on reserve) S. Smooha, “Ethnic Democracy in Israel as an Archetype,” in *Israel Studies*, 2:2, Fall 1997.

Topic for Thursday: *Israel and the US*

Required reading:

- (on reserve) John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt, "The Israel Lobby and US Foreign Policy"
- (on reserve) Benny Morris, "The Ignorance at the Heart of an Innuendo: And Now Some Facts," *The New Republic Online*, 08 May 2006

Recommended reading:

- Michael Massing, "The Storm Over the Israel Lobby," *New York Review of Books*, 53:8, 08 June 2006
- Dmitry Simes, "Unrealists," *The National Interest*, no. 84, Summer 2006

**Week Fourteen:** *What Future(s) Can Israel Expect?*

Required reading:

- Rosenthal, Epilogue: "Shalom/Salaam"
- Other reading: TBA

**Key Dates:**

***Spring Break:*** March 14-22 (classes resume on Monday, March 23)

***Finals Preparation Day:*** Monday, May 11 (no classes)

**FINAL EXAMINATION:** *Wednesday, May 13, 8:00-10:00 a.m.*