THE HISTORY OF THE MODERN STATE OF ISRAEL
Spring 2012
Rothberg International School, Hebrew University of Jerusalem
Dr. David Mendelsson

The course was offered in 19 class meetings, with each class session two hours. It was designed as a general introductory course for college undergraduates. Chronologically, the course covers Zionist/Israeli history from its origins to 2009. It was offered at the Rothberg International School at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in the spring 2012 semester. Appreciation is extended to Dr. David Mendelsson for his permission to post this syllabus. Choices of lecture topics, lectures, discussions and reading assignments rest with Dr. Mendelson (The reserves are for Hebrew University students use and are not accessible on this site).

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Description: This course will begin with an examination of the Zionist idea; its common denominators and variegated factions. Due consideration will be given to the late-nineteenth century European context in order to appreciate the socio-economic, political and cultural factors that impacted upon the Zionist movement.

The course will explore how competing visions for the Jewish state responded to the realities of Palestine; its local Arab population, Ottoman rulers and existing Jewish population. Following the First World War a new set of circumstances emerged for the Arab and Jewish populations particularly as European powers discussed their respective desiderata for the area. The class will discuss the McMahon-Hussein correspondence, the Sykes-Picot agreement and the Balfour Declaration in order to appreciate whether Palestine was "a twice promised land." Following further Jewish migration to Palestine, land purchase and other nation-building activities, the Arabs of Palestine rebelled first in 1920-1, again in 1929 and later initiated a Revolt that spanned three years from 1936-9. The class will examine the various British attempts to restore law and order and placate the ambitions of the Arab national movement whilst at the same time not giving the appearance of abandoning its commitments to the Zionist movement. The course will study the Peel Commission partition plan (1937) and the reactions of the Zionists, Palestinian Arabs and emerging Arab states. Why in 1939 did Britain withdraw from partition and recommend serious limitations on Jewish immigration and land purchase as well as the establishment of a single Palestine state?
The course will discuss Arab and Zionist approaches towards the Allied war effort as well as their respective attitudes towards the future of the territory in a post-war settlement. Following the end of hostilities, the Zionist endeavor for statehood reached a zenith initially by diplomacy and thereafter combined with violence against the Mandate authority. The course explains the various claims as to why the British left Palestine, the recommendations of the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine and its majority proposal for the partition of the territory. Students will learn of the first Arab-Israeli war, the refugee crisis and the Rhodes armistice agreements. Students will be introduced to the writings of the New Historians and their critics.

At this half way point the course will turn its attention to internal and external dilemmas that faced and indeed continue to face the Israeli state. The schism surrounding religious – secular relations will be studied both in its manifestation in the early years of statehood as well in ensuing years. The claim that Israel adopted a position of consociational politics in this arena will be examined. A further field of study will be the approach of the hegemonic Labor movement towards the Mizrachi-Oriental immigrations of the 1950s and early 1960s. Expressions of alienation and discrimination will be explored as well as the claim that the ethnic gap remains "real" and not only symbolic in contemporary Israel. The course will proceed to examine other competing voices in Israeli society including those of its Arab citizens. It will ask whether existing tensions can be accommodated by a reaffirmation of the Jewish-democratic characterization of the state or whether alternative paradigms might be considered.

The various expressions of the Israel-Arab conflict will be given due consideration as well as the efforts at peace making, particularly those with Egypt, Jordan and the Palestinians. The failure of the negotiations at Camp David in 2000 will be addressed as well as the second intifada. It is hoped that there will be sufficient time to ponder the outcomes of the recent war in Gaza and the Israeli national elections of February 2009.

Classes take the form of lectures, discussion based on the assigned readings and one on-site visit.

Requirements:
2. Participation in study outing.
3. Short assignments (two) 30%.
4. Mid-term paper or exam 35%.
5. Final exam 35%.

List of Key Books


**Course Outline**

(* denotes text in the reader)

1. 19th & 21st February  
   **Introduction: Zionism in its Historical Context and the Common Denominators of the Zionist Idea.**  

2. 26th February  
   **Old Yishuv and New Yishuv/Herzl and the Rise of Political Zionism**  
   Sachar I, pp. 18-64.  
   Hertzberg, pp. 204-226 (Herzl).  

3. 28th February  
   **Zionism as a Secular Jewish Identity**  

4. 4th March  
   **The Second Aliyah, the Yishuv during World War I and the Balfour Declaration**  
   *Letter from Sir Henry McMahon to the Sharif Hussain, 24.10.1915 Kaplan II, pp. 73-79.*
5. 6th March  
**The Mandate for Palestine and the Churchill Memorandum**  
*Churchill Memorandum in Kaplan II, pp. 113-118.  
Sachar I, pp. 116-137.  

6. 11th March  
**Developments 1929-1931 and the Arab Question in Zionism**  
*Kaplan I, pp. pp. 303-307 (Herzl) 307- 311 (Ahad Ha'am) 319-322 (Jabotinsky), 327-333 (Ben Gurion), 333-340 (Buber).  
Sachar I, pp. 163-194.  

7. 13th March  
**The Partition Plan and the MacDonald White Paper**  
*Selection from the Peel Commission Report in; Kaplan II, pp. 164-182.  
Morris, Righteous, pp.138-160  
Sachar I, pp. 195-226.

8. 18th & 20th March  
**Developments during World War II/ The Struggle for the State**  
*Biltmore Program in Kaplan II, pp. 55-56.  
*Selections from UN General Assembly Resolution 181 in, Rabinovich and Reinharz, pp. 61-63.  

25th March  
**Mid-term Exam**
9. 27th March
The 1948 War and its Aftermath
*UN General Assembly Resolution 194, Rabinovich and Reinharz, pp. 89-92.
Sachar I, pp. 315-353.

10. 15th April
Mass Migration
View Film: The Homecoming (Episode of *Tkuma* TV series)
Sachar I, pp. 395-428.

11. 17th April
The Haredim in Israel
Either:
Or:

19th April
Site Visit – Field Trip
Mount Herzl

12. 22nd April
Religion and State
13. 24th April

**The Six Day War and its Aftermath**

*The Khartoum Resolutions in Rabinovich and Reinharz, p.241-2; UN Security Council Resolution 242 in Rabinovich and Reinharz, pp.242-243;
*The Palestinian National Covenant in Rabinovich and Reinharz, pp. 243-246.
Sachar I, pp. 615-666.

14. 29th April

**The Yom Kippur War**

Sachar I, pp. 740-787.

15. 1st May

**Gush Emunim: The Settler Voice.**


16. 6th May

**From Peace Treaty with Egypt to First Intifada**


17. 8th May

**Peace Process and Current Crisis**

*Laqueur and Rubin, 6th ed., 413-425 (Israel-PLO Declaration of Principles) 443-455, (Israel-PLO: Cairo Agreement -"Oslo I").
*Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip ("Oslo II").
Rabinovich and Reinharz, pp. 502-505.
Amendment to the Palestine National Charter, 506-7
Rabinovich and Reinharz,

18. 13th May
Arabs in Israel

19. 15th May
A Changing Israel
Oz Almog, 'The Sabra Genome in the Israeli Mentality,' *Tikkun* May 2008

20. 20th & 22nd May
Current Debate: Jewish State, Democratic State
*Leon Wieseltier, 'Israel, Palestine and the Return of the Bi-National Fantasy,' *The New Republic* 27 October 2003
Benny Morris, *One State, Two States; Resolving the Israel/Palestine Conflict* (Yale University Press, New Haven, 2009).

29th May
Review

3rd June
Final Exam