"The Struggle for Israeli Identity"
Spring Semester – 2016

Sde Boker Campus, The Ben Gurion Research Institute for the Study of Israel and Zionism

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Course Description:
We will start by outlining the construction of Israel’s collective identity during the State's formative years. We will then discuss the shattering of that collective outlook in subsequent years and will proceed to examining its transformation into its current condition of a kaleidoscopic set of different and even contrasting identities. The theoretical notions of individual and collective identities will guide us throughout the course. Among the topics to be explored are: Israel's political system and society; ethnic relations in Israel; the Arab minorities in the Jewish state; is there a unique Israeli culture?; Israeli Occupation and settlement projects; the struggle for a unifying Israeli identity.
The course will conclude with a staged peace conference on the conflict between Israel and Palestine

Course Objectives:
The object of this course is to provide an advanced understanding of modern Israeli politics, culture and identity(ies). The theoretical prisms of both collective and individual identities will serve us as an analytical tool in our examination of Israeli society, culture and politics.

Course Structure:
Each class will be composed of lectures, discussions and short presentations.

Total # of Credits: 4

Teaching Method:
The course will be conducted through a combination of formal lectures, independent study and class discussions. The lectures and discussions will be based on weekly reading assignments. A broad array of genres and modes of expression - not only academic writings, but also literature, popular music, film, documentaries and art - will be incorporated into our discussion.

Course Requirements
Mandatory attendance -- YES
Pre-requisites -- NONE

Structure of Final Course Grad
1. Participation (including in-class study groups, presentations, and the Staged Peace Conference) 20%
2. Short reading assignments 40%
3. Final paper or Seminar Paper 40%

Course Schedule Layout:

I. Theoretical and historical considerations

1. Opening remarks and theoretical foundations
   - Israel today – the complexity of contemporary Israeli society
   - Individual and collective identity formation: theoretical underpinnings
   - The Zionist Meta-narrative: basic characteristics – the New Jew and the return to the old-new homeland

2. Israel's formative years, 1948-1973
   - Civil Religion in Israel and the formation of Israel’s core identity, the "Sabra"
   - Israel’s political system
   - The three branches of government
   - The educational systems
   - Amos Oz: "Where the Jackals Howl"

II. The great divide

3. The watershed of 1973-1982
   - The watershed of 1973-1982 and the shattering of the old Civil Religion of Statism and the New Jew myth
   - Israel as a Jewish immigrant society: Jewish-ethnic relations – the Mizrahim [I]

III. Israel's history and identity revisited

4. The Mizrahim [II]: the Mizrahim of today
   - Current Mizrahi identity
   - Shas

5. 1948 revisited [I]
   - Background to the debate on 1948
   - The debate over 1948

6. 1948 revisited [II]
   - The debate over 1948 (cont.)
   - The Israeli revisionist school (the "New Historians"; Post-Zionism)
   - The presence of the Nakba in contemporary Israel
7. **The Arab minorities in Israel**
   - The Palestinian-Arabs and the Bedouin-Arabs in Israel – history, identity
   - "The Future Vision of the Palestinian Arabs in Israel"

8. **Is Israel a colonialist state?**
   - Israel's Occupation and settlements' projects
   - The messianic component in Israeli identity and politics
   - The Religious Right

9. **The Holocaust in Israeli Identity; the Israeli Diaspora**
   - The role of the Holocaust in Israeli identity
   - The Israeli Diaspora

10. **The Ultra-Orthodox (Haredim); How Jewish is the Jewish state?**
    - The Ultra-Orthodox (Haredi) communities in Israel
    - How Jewish is the Jewish state?

11. **Social protests in Israel; Israeli culture;**
    - Israeli economy, globalization in Israel; technology and environment in Israel today
    - Israel’s social protest movement of summer 2011 (“Occupy Tel Aviv”)
    - Israeli popular music and Israeli identity

12. **A Staged Peace Conference**

**READINGS**

Readings for session #1:
Recommended:

Readings for session #2:
Readings for session #3:

Recommended:

Readings for session #4:

Recommended:

Readings for session #5:

Recommended:

Readings for session #6:
22. Ghassan Kanafani, "Returning to Haifa", in his: Palestine’s Children: Returning to Haifa & Other Stories (boulder, London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2000), 149-188

Recommended:


**Readings for session #7:**


28. *The Future Vision of the Palestinian Arabs in Israel:*
   http://www.adalah.org/newsletter/eng/dec06/tasawor-mostaqbali.pdf

**Recommended:**


**Readings for session #8:**


**Recommended:**


**Readings for session #9:**

39. Steven J. Gold, *The Israeli Diaspora* (Routledge, 2002), 1-20


**Recommended:**

Readings for session #10:

Readings for session #11:
44. “Miracles and Mirages: A strong economy built on weak fundamentals,” The Economist (April 3rd 2008)
45. Motti Regev and Edwin Seroussi, Popular Music and National Culture in Israel (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 1-14, 236-248

Recommended:

Readings for session #12:
Recommended:

Additional Recommended Bibliography

1. Books
3. Steven J. Gold, The Israeli Diaspora (Routledge, 2002)
8. Ilan Pappe (ed.), The Israel/Palestine Question (London and New York: Routledge, 1999)
15. On the Israeli diaspora see *Shofar* 16.2 (1998) - a special issue called "Israel and America"

2. Scholarly Journals and articles:
   1. Israel Studies
   2. Journal of Palestine Studies
   3. Journal of Israeli History
   4. International Journal for Middle Eastern Studies
   5. Israel Affairs
   6. Azure

3. Websites
   i. Israeli newspapers and news sites: [http://www.worldnewspapers.com/israel.html](http://www.worldnewspapers.com/israel.html)
   iii. Haaretz – [www.haaretz.com](http://www.haaretz.com)
   v. The Jerusalem Post -- [http://www.jpost.com](http://www.jpost.com)
   vi. Ma'ariv -- [www.nrg.co.il/online/HP_0.html](http://www.nrg.co.il/online/HP_0.html)
   viii. Ynet -- [www.ynetnews.com/home/0,7340,L-3083,00.html](http://www.ynetnews.com/home/0,7340,L-3083,00.html)
   xi. Hebrew University's Steven Spielberg Jewish Film Archive -- [http://w3.castup.net/spielberg/](http://w3.castup.net/spielberg/) (The Archive has over 10,000 titles, with over 400 films currently available for viewing online in full for free)
   xii. Zochrot (Remembering) [Zochrot ("Remembering") is a group of Israeli citizens working to raise awareness of the Nakba, the Palestinian catastrophe of 1948]: [http://www.zochrot.org/index.php?lang=english](http://www.zochrot.org/index.php?lang=english)
Learning Goals:
By the end of the course, you should be able to:

- Define and describe major events in the history of modern Israel
- Define and describe Israel's political regime (political parties, municipal and regional administration, etc.)
- Define, describe and appraise the major analytical terms used in our course
- Integrate course data into a coherent narrative(s) of current Israeli identity(ies)

Cell phones and laptops policy:

Cell phones: Use of cell phones in class (for talking, texting, reading/writing email, or any other purpose) is prohibited. Kindly keep your cell phones turned off and stowed away in class. However, if you need to leave your cell phone on because of an ongoing emergency situation, please speak to me at the start of class.

Laptops: Kindly keep your laptop turned off and stowed away in class. Using laptop computers in class is permitted only for taking notes pertaining to our discussion, or for independent work related to the course.

Possible topics for classroom presentations

- Israel's political system
- Israel's educational systems
- Israeli military
- Globalization and Israel
- Israel's municipal and regional systems
- The postzionism debate
- The Israeli economy
- Israel's settlement projects and colonialism
- How Jewish is the Jewish State?
- The Holocaust in Israeli identity
- The Israeli Diaspora
- Jewish-ethnic groups in Israel
- The Ultra-Orthodox sub-culture in Israel
- Civil society in Israel [NGOs, etc.]
- The Palestinian-Arab minority in Israel
- 'Ethnic democracy' versus 'ethnocracy'
- 'Jewish and democratic' versus 'a state for all its citizens'
- Israeli popular music as a reflection of the country's identity
• Israeli literature and Israeli identity
• Israel and the Jewish-Diaspora relations
• The development of Israel's culinary as an expression of its identity
• The Israeli-Palestinian ethnic and national conflict in comparative perspective:
  Cyprus
  Sri Lanka
  Former Yugoslavia
  South Africa
  Northern Ireland
  French Algeria
  Former Soviet Union
  The Balkans
  Africa