The war of 1948 has shaped the history of modern Middle East more than any other single event. The establishment (and survival) of the state of Israel despite Arab efforts to avert it, on one hand, and the prevention of establishment an Arab state in Palestine while creating the Palestinian refugee problem, on the other, are the main lasting consequences of this war.

Naturally enough, Zionists and Arabs see the events of 1948 rather differently (leaving alone the internal debates within each camp). Zionists view the result of the war as a fulfillment of a dream to regain Jewish sovereignty in the holy land after 2000 years of Diaspora, and a realization of their natural right to freedom and statehood, acknowledged by the international community after the Holocaust. Arabs, generally speaking, see the war as the culmination of a colonialist endeavor in which the Jews accomplished their idea of transferring the Arabs of Palestine, with the consent of the West who aimed to disunite the Arab nation.

Debates on the real intentions of the Jewish forces during the war, as well as the reasons to the collapse of the Palestinian society, still exists in both scholarly and political writing. These debates touch the very core of Palestinian and Zionist narratives, the self-image of each society and the way they portray themselves to the outer world. Studying the events of 1948 is therefore rather problematic, taking into consideration that (almost) each of us carries with him his beliefs, previous knowledge, views, and to a certain degree his prejudices. Nevertheless, in this course we will try to understand – not necessarily to adopt - both Israeli and Palestinian perspectives on the war, including its military, ethical, political and international dimensions.

**Background and general readings on 1948**


**Week 1 Historical Background: Zionists and Arabs under the mandate.**


**Week 2 The International arena: the way to partition**

The British decision to withdraw from Palestine; the international response; the partition plan; the US and USSR support for the plan.


**Week 3 Jewish and Arab responses to the Partition**


**Week 4 The first stage of the war – “the civil war”**

Main features and moves; the struggle over the roads; Jewish and Arab terror; the Arab and Jewish forces.


**Week 5 Turning points in the “civil War”**


Week 6 The birth of the refugee problem

The Causes for the Refuge Problem – first stage of the war


The formal birth of Israel

Israeli Declaration of Independence: decision making and meaning to the future


   [Both access through EBSCO]

Week 7 The Arab war – May 15 onwards

The Arab invasion to Palestine; the aims of the invaders; the role of the Arab league; inter-Arab relations; the Muslim Brotherhood.


Week 8 Facing the Arab armies – Israel: military aspects.

Major operations; The Israeli army.


Week 9 International intervention

The Truces; Count Bernadotte: his plan, his failure and his assassination; the armistice agreements; the UN resolutions.


Week 10 “Ethnic cleansing”: or self Defense: The Debate over the Refuge Problem

The various reasons for flight; blocking the Return, UNRWA and its role; the role of the Arab states,


Week 11 Minorities in the war and the question of collaboration.

The Druze, the Bedouins; the Christians, the Communists


**Week 12 The end of the War**


**Week 13 1948 today – history and memory**


Screening: “The Inner Tour” by Ra’anan Alexandrowitch (Israel, 2001).