Course Description

The course will focus on the contested holy places in Israel and historical Palestine as national and political symbols for consolidating internal and external legitimacy for parties in the Middle East conflict. The major questions to be discussed are: Why does violence break out? How is violence used to cement national (political) and religious identities? And what are conflict resolution and conflict management measures used to prevent or reduce violence? Topics include: the Status Quo system and its violations; reviving traditions, "conversion", or "museumising" sacred sites for political ends. Case studies include the Cave of the Patriarchs/Ibrahimi Mosque in Hebron; the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, the Temple Mount/Al-Aqsa, the Western Wall, the Nachmanides Cave, the Mamilla Cemetery and Samuel's Tomb in Jerusalem; a strife over an Islamic tomb near the Church of Annunciation in Nazareth and controversies involving mosques in Jaffa and Beersheva.

For this course we recommend that you refer to Maps of Jerusalem which may be found at the Center for Israel Education, https://israeled.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Jerusalem-Old-City.jpg and other sources to be provided on the course website.

Goals

The objective of this course is to provide students with a multi-faceted grounding in the historical context of and reasons for conflict or tolerance regarding holy places, using case studies from the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

By the end of the course the student will be able to:

- Identify causes of conflict eruption and the parameters for creating tolerance at shared holy places
- Distinguish between different tools of conflict management and conflict resolution
- Contextualize the conjunction between religion and politics regarding shared holy places
• Compare between the narratives of parties to the conflict
• Historically contextualize the religious dimension of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict
• Critically assess authors’ arguments or interpretive schema
• Articulate ideas on the interplay between religion and politics in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the Middle East

Course Methods:

This course will make use of different methods of study: lectures, electronic media inserts, facilitated group discussions, student presentations and writing assignments. Regular attendance is vital to successful completion of the course. Much of the material for the course will be conveyed through the lectures. Exams will consist of material covered in both lectures and course readings.

Grading:

Four assignments/homework (25% - see rubrics), final paper (7 pp.) (35%), final exam – multiply choice and essay (40%) on Tuesday, December 18th from 11:30 a.m.-2 p.m.

Computer Policy: You can use a laptop/tablet pending that Wi-Fi is turned off. If students frequently appear distracted by their computers, I may institute a no-electronics policy.

Attendance, homework and active participation: It is expected that students attend, arrive on time, and actively participate in discussions, homework and other in-class activities.

Honor Code: Emory University Honor Code applies.

Office hours: Walk-in policy every Tuesday and Thursday between 2:15-4:00. I will be available in the office beyond these hours. Please send me an email if you wish to come outside these hours.

Late paper and late homework: The grade of the assignment will be lowered by 10% for each day a paper is late.

Topics and Assigned Readings

Week 1. Theoretical Approaches: Holiness and Politics

Goals:
• Identify two major theoretical approaches to conflicts in shared holy places
• Match one of the two theoretical concepts to a given case of dispute

Required reading before first class (54pp.):


**In-class activity:**

• Each student will introduce himself/herself and explain why he/she chose this course.

• Write down three objectives you expect from the course. We will discuss expectations and I will explain which of them will be met in the course and which may be met in personal meetings during office hours.

• Answer a short questionnaire on your knowledge about Israel-Palestine and holy places.

• Discuss possible topics for papers and presentations

• Divide into two groups: one Israeli and one Palestinian. Each group has to explain what theory fits its national narrative of the conflict. Students must ground their explanation in factual events and address the reasons cited by the researcher who coined the theory.

**Homework #1:**

• Chose a shared holy place anywhere in the world outside of Israel. In a short 2-page paper, define the relationship between the different groups of devotees (conflict, tolerance or other) and link this case to one of the three major theoretical concepts. The short paper will be later developed into a 7-page paper and presentation in class.

**Evaluation Rubric (50 out of 200 points of the homework grade (25% of total grade))**

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<tr>
<th>Expectation</th>
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<tr>
<td>1 Paper is no longer than 2 pp and brings a relevant case study</td>
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<td>5 Has a clear conclusion</td>
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<td>6 Systematic organization of the paper from question to conclusion</td>
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**Week 2. Defining the Holy – Case Study: The Nachmanides Cave in Jerusalem**

**Goals:**

• Identify the term "holy place" in Judaism according to practice
• Compare between the different approaches to holiness by the Israeli government
• Identify political motivations for defining a site as "holy"

Required reading (20 pp.):
• Reiter, Y. Contested Holy Places in Israel-Palestine, pp. 121-131.

In-class activity:
• Break up into small groups. Each group nominates a note-taker and defines a holy place. After first rounds of presentations, we will have a second round and groups will define categories of holiness.
• Debate between two groups: Should the Nachmanides Cave be a holy place? Why and why not?

Homework # 2:
• In his article, Wygoda classifies three degrees of holiness of sacred sites. List two holy places in Israel that match each of the three degrees, and bring your list with you for the next week’s discussion.

Week 3. Sacred Land among Israeli Jews, Palestinian Muslims, and Christians

Goals:
• Compare between Israeli and Palestinian/Arab/Moslem and Christian narratives of sacredness of the national land and Jerusalem
• Identify the mechanism of religious sanctification of the land

Required reading (66pp.):

In-class activity:
• Break up into small groups and read an entry about the Land of Israel. Identify the reasons why Jews view the entire land as sacred. Each group will present its findings in class.
• Second round of group study: discuss the differences between the Jewish perspective and the Christian one, then the Muslim one.

**Homework # 3:**
• Search the web for sources grounding why the Land of Israel is sacred to the Children of Israel, the Jews. Summarize these grounds in bullets on one page and list the links used for the summary.

**Evaluation Rubric (50 out of 200 points of the homework grade (25% of total grade))**

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<tr>
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**Week 4. The Status Quo Principle: The Holy Sepulchre and Deir al-Sultan**

**Goals:**
• Define "Status Quo" in a given situation
• Identify circumstances and mechanisms for changing the Status Quo

**Required reading (35pp.):**

**In-class activity:**
• Divide the class into small groups, each representing one Christian denomination at the Holy Sepulchre. Each group must prepare a 5-minute presentation describing the Status Quo from its particular perspective based on L. Cust’s Manual.
• Second round of discussion: after read Eordegian's description of the historical circumstances for the 19th century Status Quo, discuss who the beneficiaries of the Sultan's decree were.
Week 5. Between Sharing and Contesting the Holy: Case Studies - The Cave of the Patriarch in Hebron and the Tomb of the Prophet Samuel near Jerusalem (Comparison with Cases from North India)

Goals:

- Compare different case studies of conflict and tolerance at shared holy sites
- Evaluate the conflict management and conflict resolution tools that were used in each of the four case studies examined

Required reading (75pp.):


Homework # 4:

1. Read Bigelow's article on shared holy sites in India and compare (1 page only) the incentives for co-habitation and mutual respect in India and in Samuel's Tomb.
2. Create a table comparing the social, religious and political circumstances in each of the two case studies: Cave of the Patriarch and Samuel's Tomb.

Evaluation Rubric (50 out of 200 points of the homework grade (25% of total grade))

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In-class activity:

1. Read the announcement of the Israeli government's decision to include the Hebron shrine in the list of Jewish National Sites. Write down two reasons why the government did this, and why the decision outraged the Palestinians.
2. Next, read the Palestinian reaction and the UNESCO resolution reacting to that decision. Write down the arguments used by the Palestinians to object to the Israeli decision. Sum up by comparing the arguments in your two answers.
Week 6. Holy Places as National Symbols: Case Study - The Western Wall

Goals:
- Identify pros and cons of the Status Quo regime.
- Evaluate the British Mandate mechanism of conflict resolution in the Western Wall crisis.
- What was the status of the Western Wall between 1948 and 1967, after 1967
- Why is the Western Wall a flash point for Jews and Arabs as well as between Jewish denominations?

Required reading (27pp.):
  Available: [https://unispal.un.org/DPA/DPR/unispal.nsf/0/59A92104ED00DC468525625B00527FEA](https://unispal.un.org/DPA/DPR/unispal.nsf/0/59A92104ED00DC468525625B00527FEA)

In-class activity:
- Divide the class into groups of six. Each group has to write a scenario for an inter-religious crisis at the Western Wall today.
- Second stage: each group has to suggest a way to solve the crisis and recommend what tools of conflict resolution to use.

Homework #5:
- Using the decision of the Commission of Inquiry, identify five major arguments of each of the two parties to the 1929 Western Wall dispute. What do you think is the primary disagreement?

Evaluation Rubric (50 out of 200 points of the homework grade (25% of total grade))

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Week 7. Breaking the "Custom of the Place" by the Women of the Wall

Goals:
- Analyze a dispute over the conduct at a holy place
- Identify and evaluate strategies used by the parties to the dispute

Required reading (59pp.):

**In-class activity:**
- Mini-simulation: Teams represent the following stakeholders: Original WOW, Anat Hofman and mainstream WOW, Ultra-Orthodox Women for the Wall, Rabbi Rabinowitz, Israeli Government, Reform Movement, Conservative Movement, Secular Jews in Israel. Negotiate a solution that all parties could live with. Identify the debated core issues and suggest compromises.

**Week 8. (De)Constructing the Mughrabi Pathway**

**Goals:**
- Identify boundaries of a holy site
- Analyze grounds leading for the outbreak of violence in and around holy places
- Evaluate the use of conflict resolution measures
- Evaluate the role of regional politics
- Evaluate the role of external/international actors

**Required reading (18pp.):**
- Reiter, Y. *Contested Holy Places in Israel-Palestine*, pp. 70-88.

**In-class activity:**
- Discussion questions: What is the role of UNESCO? What is the role of Jordan? Why is the Mughrabi Ramp so important? What could be done to resolve the dispute?

**Week 9. The Beersheba Mosque/Museum and Hasan Bey Mosque in Jaffa/Yaffo**

**Goals:**
- Compare between grounds for success and failure in two struggles for operating an old mosque
- Evaluate political circumstances for a religious minority to be represented in the public space

**Required reading (32pp.):**

**In-class activity:**
• Group discussion: What are the ‘yes’ and ‘no’s for allowing to build a mosque close to Ground Zero, as a case study of minority representation in the public space at a sensitive and controversial site.

**Week 10. Museumizing over the Dead: Mamilla Cemetery and the Museum of Tolerance**

**Goals:**

- Analyze political motivations related to struggle over the nature of symbolic and historical public space
- Evaluate the role of judicial tribunal in resolving conflicts on holy places

**Required reading (67 pp.):**


**In-class activity:**

- Divide the class into a tribunal to judge and actors: Islamic Movement; Muslim families; Israeli government; MOT. Conduct a process of mediation, and then adjudication on the case of building a public facility on top of a historical cemetery.

**Week 11. Restoring Pilgrimage to Mashhad Hussein in Ashkelon**

**Goals:**

- Analyze grounds for restoring a holy place and pilgrimage

**Required reading (49pp.):**

- Reiter, Y. *Contested Holy Places in Israel-Palestine*, pp. 228-244.

**In-class activity:**

- Discussion – Is the Mashhad an authentic site of burial?; Why did a Sh`ite site transform into a Sunnite tradition of festival and pilgrimage? Why was the site demolished? Why did Israel allow the revival of pilgrimage and construction of the memorial?

**Week 12. Multi-Dimensional Conflict over a Holy Site: The Case of Building a Mosque Near the Church of Annunciation in Nazareth**
Goals:
- Identify causes for the outbreak of dispute and violence
- Apply Kriesberg’s theory of interlocking conflicts
- Assess the efficiency of conflict resolution methods
- Evaluate the intervention of external international actors

Required reading (59pp.):

In-class activity:
- Discussion questions: What are the causes for the outbreak of the dispute and violence? What are the conflict resolution methods that were used and what were not used; What was the role of external international actors? Did they help or obstruct?

Week 13. Presentations
Goals:
- Analyze a case study of a shared holy place. Discuss its players and motives, historical background, incentives for peace or dispute, and what measures have been used to treat the conflict.

In-class activity:
- For each presentation there will be a peer review + instructor’s evaluation according to the following rubric:

Week 14. The Temple Mount/Al-Haram al-Sharif as the Core of the Current Palestinian-Israeli Conflict in a Comparative Perspective

Goals:
- Understand why, when, and record how this area has repeatedly been a flash point of tensions for Jews, Muslims, and Christians over time
- Compare narratives and contextualize them according to political ends
- Compare two case studies from Israel and India
- Classify primary and secondary interests of the major stakeholders
- Analyze the meaning of the Status Quo at the TM/HS compound
- Identify the Israeli-Jordanian-Palestinian modus vivendi and its collapse

Required reading (63pp.):

In-class activity:
• Divide the class into groups for a simulation on a crisis at a shared holy place in Israel. Read the simulation script and role-play the negotiation of a new settlement for the crisis. The script will suggest two rounds of negotiation: 1. Conflict management; 2. Conflict resolution (permanent agreement).
• Answer a questionnaire about the three most important things you learned in this course; what did you expect to learn and was not discussed during the course; what changes, if any, would you recommend to be included in this course for future use of the instructor.

Evaluation Rubric for final paper (140 points value 35% of final grade)

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More bibliography for your papers on Jerusalem and holy places:


Extra recommended bibliography:

A general bibliography and excellent timeline of Jerusalem of time may be found at the Center for Israel Education, [https://israeled.org/themes/jerusalem/](https://israeled.org/themes/jerusalem/)

a. On Jews and Arabs in Jerusalem: Between Conflict and Coexistence


**On Divided Cities**


