Ginsburg Ingerman Overseas Students Program
Ben-Gurion University of the Negev

Minorities in Israel
13-5-439
Fall Semester
Tuesdays 12:15-14:00

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Course Description

Non-Jewish minority groups in Israel have developed widely varying relationships with the State of Israel, stemming from their initial attitudes towards Zionism and the Jewish people. We will strive to give a deeper understanding of the complexities and intricacies of Jewish-non-Jewish relations within the Jewish state. The lectures and material include the pre-State history of the different groups as well as a survey of their development in Israel. Issues to be analyzed include communal relationships to Israeli politics, their place in the military system, the progress of their socioeconomic and integration, and group identity relative to Israeli society at large.

Course Objectives:

The course strives to give students a deeper understanding of the complexities, intricacies and dilemmas of relations between Jews and non-Jews within Israel.

Learning Outcomes:

On successful completion of this course, students should be able to:

1. Distinguish between the various ethnic minorities in Israel
2. Critically analyze the debate over the ethnic minorities’ status
3. Recall Israeli legislation and policies regarding ethnic minorities in Israel

4. Summarize the legal status, rights and obligations of ethnic minorities in Israel

5. Understand the impact of Israeli policies toward its ethnic minorities

**Course Structure:**

Total # of lectures: 13  Total # of credits: 3

ECTS (European Credit Transfer System): will be calculated by OSP

**Teaching method**

The course will be conducted through a combination of formal lectures, class discussion and meetings with representatives of ethnic minorities both on and off the campus. Lectures and class discussions will be based on weekly reading assignments and handouts. Students will also engage in the subjects by bringing in outside material such as current events articles.

**Requirements**

Students are expected to actively participate in all class meetings and field trips, make class presentations and hand in assignments in timely fashion.

**Structure of Final Course Grade**

1. Participation (attendance, discussion): 15%
2. Midterm exam (take-home assignment): 30%
3. Final exam (in-class): 40%
4. Reflections, student presentation of current events article: 15%

Total 100%

Notes: * Work handed in late will not be graded

* 2 unexcused missed class meetings = final grade will be lowered an entire grade

**Time required for individual work**

In addition to attendance in class, students are expected to do their assignments and individual work as follows:

2 hours of reading and reflection per week
6 hours of work on midterm assignments
2 hours of work on the presentations
8 hours of work on their final

These expectations are approximate and correlate with the module's ECTS.

Class outline

Note: Readings for each week to be completed in advance are listed under each topic.

1: Introduction – Overview (12/9)

- Expectations for the semester
- The modern nation state - one land for one people?
- Status of minorities in the Land of Israel since Ottoman times
- Demographic overview of Israel's non-Jewish ethnic groups

2: The changing status of Eretz Israel's minorities (19/9)

- Models of governance – from liberal to ethnic democracy
- The millet system: Divide and rule or accommodation?
- Indigenous minorities versus migrant minorities
- Discussion: balancing civil and national rights with security


3: Muslim and Christian Palestinian-Israelis (26/9)

- Historical trauma: from privileged to minority status and displacement
- Evolution from Arab-Israeli to Palestinian identity
- Muslim-Christian tensions
- Offshoots without conflict: Ahmadis and Arameans


**4: The Druze: Contradictory Identities (3/10)**

- Secession from and conflict with Muslim rulers
- Alliance with Israel: a covenant of outsiders
- Serving in the IDF and the limits of privilege
- Whither Druze identity?


**5: Bedouin: It’s All About the Land (17/10)**

- Confronting modernity, choosing sides
- Service in the IDF, resettlement back at home
- Maintaining cross-border ties
- The fight for recognized communities and land rights


**6: Circassians: Loyal soldier (24/10)**

- Finding refuge from the Czar, common ground with Zionist settlers
- Maintaining a separate identity among Muslims
- 21st century challenges


**7: FIELD TRIP: (27/10) 7:45am-4:15pm – Circassians & Druze**
• Leave 7:45am for Usifiya and Kafr Kama, return 3 pm
• Option for Druze-hosted lunch
• Option to remain up north for weekend (plan ahead)

8: Minorities on the fringes: immigrants and migrants (31/10)
  • The Law of Return - who's in, who's out
  • Immigrating outside the Law of Return
  • Rights and obligations of non-citizen residents
  • The debate over absorbing non-Jewish, non-Arabs/Muslims


9: Russian non-Jews (7/11)
  • Getting swept out of the Soviet floodgates
  • Creating a sub-culture in Israel
  • Fighting for personal rights: conversion, marriage and burial
  • Debate: separation of synagogue and state

Reading: Rajman, Rebeca and Janina Pinsky, "'Non-Jewish and Christian': Perceived Discrimination and Social Distance among FSU Migrants in Israel," Israel Affairs 17 (1, 2011): 125-141.

10: Hebrew Israelites (14/11)
  • A strange Aliyah, an uncomfortable coexistence
  • Flourishing on the fringes of Israeli society
  • Gradual integration through the army and citizenship


11: Migrant workers and asylum seekers (21/11)
  • Israel's historic dependence on Palestinian labor and the post-Oslo crisis
  • Israel's changing economy: the need for Chinese, Thais, Philippines, etc.
- East Africans: Illegal migrants vs. political refugees
- Suffer the children: the human rights struggle of migrant families


12: Field Trip – Non-Jewish migrants and immigrants (1/12)
- Leave 8am for South Tel Aviv, return 3 pm

13: Invisible communities: Minorities within minorities (5/12)
- On their own path: Armenian Christians
- Refugees: Vietnamese boat people, SLA fighters and Kurds
- Permanently temporary residents: Bahai, Mormons and Christian Zionists


Newspaper articles

14: Conclusion (12/12)
- Flaws in the current framework, challenges and obstacles to change
- How minorities are changing the face and fabric of Israel