



Israel Studies International MA Program

Ben-Gurion University of the Negev

Israel in the Jewish World

Spring Semester 2014

Tuesday, 14:30 – 16:00

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

Prof. Arie Saposnik

Email: saposnik@bgu.ac.il

Phone: 08-659-6960

Office Hours: Tuesday, 10:00-11:30 and by appointment

Course Description:

From its outset, Zionism was haunted by an acute tension between the Land of Israel and the Jewish Diaspora. On the one hand, powerful bonds linked the national home in Palestine (later, Israel) to Diaspora Jewry, and these were coupled with a tendency to look to the Diaspora for material support and moral sustenance. On the other hand, much of Zionist thought was based on desires to supersede, overcome or—in extreme formulations—even to obliterate the Jewish diaspora. These tensions were rooted, in turn, in traditional Jewish notions of the Land of Israel, which had itself been characterized by ongoing tension and negotiation between the earthly, or literal land on the one hand, and the heavenly, or metaphorical land on the other—each with its place in Jewish life and liturgy, and each with its impact on the social, economic, and cultural relations between the disparate Jewish communities.

The purpose of this course is to examine the changing images of the Land of Israel and the State of Israel in the Jewish imagination, and to understand the powerful bonds and tensions as they coexist between Israel and the Jewish world; Israeli Jews and the Jews of the Diaspora; competing notions of Jewishness itself as they have emerged in the Land of Israel and outside of it; and differing social dynamics and community bonds that have characterized disparate Jewish communities. We will examine the foundations of some of these relations and images in the period

preceding the emergence of modern Zionism, and then attempt to follow these changing relationships as they have developed in the history of Zionism and in the wake of the establishment of the Israeli state.

Course Requirements:

- I. Attendance and Participation: Students are expected to attend class regularly and to participate actively. Participation, of course, must be based on consistent reading of the relevant materials for each given meeting. Attendance and participation will count for 10% of the final grade. The class will be conducted seminar-style, and all students are expected to be active participants and to prepare points for discussion of the reading material. Beginning in week 9, students will be asked to prepare presentations on particular readings (see below, “In-class presentations”).
- II. Written Assignment: At the end of the semester, students will submit a paper exploring in greater depth one of the topics covered in the class, or a topic related to the course but which was not examined directly over the course of the semester. The paper will constitute 60% of the final grade

Some General Guidelines for Writing papers (we will discuss more specific guidelines over the course of the semester):

- Begin with a clearly articulated research question—all writing begins with questions!
- Make sure to consider all of the sources related to the question.
- Read those sources carefully and critically; ask them questions, and confront them with one another. Careful, active, and creative reading is one of the most important pieces of serious research and writing.
- Explain in clear language what the central issues are that the sources address. When doing so, give examples and evidence by providing brief quotes.
- Remember: Your job is to make an argument, to present a case. Make sure to know what you are arguing, to articulate it clearly, and to back it up with evidence.
- CITE!—never forget to tell your reader where you are quoting from.

- III. In-Class Presentations: During the final weeks of the semester, time will be devoted to in-class student presentations of two kinds:
 - a. First, each student will take on certain reading materials and present them in class. These presentations should go beyond surveying the

material and venture into textual and methodological analysis as well as evaluation of the arguments and the evidence marshalled in their support.

- b. The second presentation will be focused on each students paper, and will be based on the initial steps taken in research for the final paper. We will discuss expectations and structure of the presentation in class.

The presentations will constitute 30% of the final grade (15% each).

Class Schedule and Readings:

1. Introduction—the central problematic and the paradox of Zionism

Reading:

- Shlomo Avineri, “Zionism as a Revolution”, in *The Making of Modern Zionism: The Intellectual Origins of the Jewish State* (Basic Books, 1981), 3-13.
- Sidra DeKoven Ezrahi, *Booking Passage: Exile and Homecoming in the Modern Jewish Imagination* (California, 2000), 3-23.

2. Changing images of the Land of Israel in a changing Jewish world

Reading:

- Jean-Christophe Attias and Esther Benbassa, *Israel, the Impossible Land* (Stanford, 2003), 1-117.

3. Early Zionism as a call for a change in Diaspora-Land of Israel relations

Reading:

- Jean-Christophe Attias and Esther Benbassa, *Israel, the Impossible Land*, 121-240.
- Rabbi Yehuda Alkalai, Rabbi Zvi Hirsch Kalischer, in Arthur Hertzberg, *The Zionist Idea—A Historical Analysis and Reader* (JPS, 1997), 103-114.
- Arie Bruce Saposnik, “... Will Issue Forth From Zion”?—The Emergence of a Jewish National Culture in Palestine and the Dynamics of Yishuv-Diaspora Relations”, *Jewish Social Studies* 10:1 (Fall 2003) pp. 151-184.

4. Images of Jews, visions of Hebrews: geography and identity, exile and homeland in Zionist thought and among its opponents

Reading:

- Ahad Ha'am, Hayyim Nahman Bialik, and Micha Yosef Berdichevsky, in Hertzberg, 249-302.
- Jacob Klatzkin in Hertzberg, 315-327.
- Mordechai Kaplan in Hertzberg, 535-544.
- Arie Bruce Saposnik, *Becoming Hebrew: The Creation of a Jewish National Culture in Ottoman Palestine* (Oxford, 2008), 189-211.
- Eliezer Schweid, "The Rejection of the Diaspora in Zionist Thought: Two Approaches", in *Essential Papers on Zionism*, ed. Jehuda Reinharz and Anita Shapira (NYU, 1996), 133-160.

5. The territorial debate within Zionism: the Land of Israel or a land for Jews?

Reading:

- David Vital, *Zionism: The Formative Years* (Oxford, 1982), 267-347.
- David Vital, "The Afflictions of the Jews and the Afflictions of Zionism: The Meaning and Consequences of the 'Uganda' Controversy", in *Essential Papers*, 119-132.
- M. Ussischkin, "Palestine and Other Countries", in *Zionist Work in Palestine*, ed. Israel Cohen (Fisher Unwin, 1911), 21-24.

6. Changing centers of Jewish life: Jewish emigration from Europe and the emergence of the new centers in Palestine and the United States

Reading:

- Matityahu Mintz, "Work for the Land of Israel and 'Work in the Present': A Concept of Unity, a Reality of Contradiction", in *Essential Papers*, 161-170.
- Saposnik, *Becoming Hebrew*, 93-120.

- Zohar Shavit, “The rise of the literary center in Palestine”, in Glenda Abramson & Tudor Parfitt (eds.) *The Great Transition*. Rowman & Allanheld: New Jersey, 1985, 126-129.

7. The establishment of the state and its political, theological, cultural ramifications

Reading:

- Ronald W. Zweig, “Israel-Diaspora Relations in the Early Years of the State”, in Laurence J. Silberstein (ed.) *New Perspectives on Israeli History* (NYU, 1991), 258-70.
- Zohar Segev, “American Zionists' Place in Israel after Statehood: From Involved Partners to Outside Supporters”, *American Jewish History* 89:3 (2007), 277-302
- David Ellenson, "Envisioning Israel in the Liturgies of North American Liberal Judaism", *Envisioning Israel, The Changing Ideal and Images of North American Jews*, in Allon Gal, (ed.) (Magness Press and Wayne State University Press, 1996), 117-148.
- Aviezer Ravitzky, “‘Forcing the End’: Zionism and the State of Israel as Antimessianic Undertakings”, in *Jews and Messianism in the Modern Era: Metaphor and Meaning* (Studies in Contemporary Jewry VII, Oxford, 1991), 34-67.

8. Euphoria and Trauma: 1967 and 1973 as watersheds for Israel and diaspora Jewry

Reading:

- Hillel Halkin, *Letters to an American Jewish Friend* (JPS, 1977), 1-113.
- Chaim I. Waxman, “The Limited Impact of the Six-Day War on America’s Jews”, in *The Six-Day War and World Jewry*, ed. Eli Lederhendler, (Maryland, 2000), 99-115.
- Anita Shapira, “Whatever Became of ‘Negating Exile’?”, in Anita Shapira (ed.), *Israeli Identity in Transition* (Praeger, 2004), 69-108.

9. Post-Zionism? Post-Post-Zionism? –A changing Israel and a changing relationship with the Diaspora—the 1980s and Beyond

Reading:

- *The A. B. Yehoshua Controversy: An Israel-Diaspora Dialogue on Jewishness, Israeliness, and Identity* (American Jewish Committee, 2006)
- Philip Roth, *Operation Shylock*
- Peter Beinart, "The Failure of the American Jewish Establishment", *The New York Review of Books*, June 10, 2010.
<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2010/jun/10/failure-american-jewish-establishment/?pagination=false>
 - Subsequent exchange between Beinart and Abe Foxman:
<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2010/jun/24/failure-american-jewish-establishment-exchange/>
- Alan Arkush, "From Diaspora Nationalism to Radical Diasporism", *Modern Judaism* 29:3 (2009) 326-350.
- Caryn Aviv and David Shneer, *New Jews: The End of the Jewish Diaspora* (NYU, 2005), 1-25.
- Tony Kushner and Alisa Solomon, "Wrestling with Zion, an Introduction", in Kushner and Solomon (eds.), *Wrestling with Zion: Progressive Jewish-American Responses to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict* (Grove Press, 2003), 1-9.
- *Contemporary Jewry*—special issue on "Distancing", 2010
- Tresa Grauer, "'A Drastically Bifurcated Legacy': Homeland and Jewish Identity in Contemporary Jewish American Literature", in Deborah Dash Moore and S. Ilan Troen (eds.), *Divergent Jewish Cultures—Israel & America* (Yale, 2001), 238-55.
- The Sharon Brous-Daniel Gordis polemic:
 - Rabbi Sharon Brous, "Heartache":
http://www.jewishjournal.com/cover_story/article/heartache_an_email_from_rabbi_sharon_brous
 - Daniel Gordis Response:
<http://blogs.timesofisrael.com/when-balance-becomes-betrayel/>

- Brous rebuttal: <http://blogs.timesofisrael.com/lowering-the-bar/>
- David Myers Response: <http://blogs.timesofisrael.com/response-to-gordis-a-simplistic-misreading-of-history/>
- Adam Bronfman response: <http://blogs.timesofisrael.com/if-not-now-when-a-response-to-gordiss-criticism-of-brous/>
- Rabbi Ed Feinstein response: <http://blogs.timesofisrael.com/all-the-families-of-the-earth/>
- Gil Troy Response: <http://blogs.timesofisrael.com/we-must-fight-totalitarian-hamas-unapologetically-but-humanely/>
- Daniel Gordis rejoinder: <http://blogs.timesofisrael.com/on-the-absence-of-outrage/>