



## Israel Studies International MA Program

Ben-Gurion University of the Negev

Israel in the Jewish World - Past, Present and Future Trends

Spring Semester 2019

Tuesday, 08.30 am – 10:00 am

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

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### Course Objectives:

The aim of this course is to acquaint the students with a variety of American Jewish perspectives regarding the state of Israel and its role within Diaspora Jewish discourse: **to what extent Israel is viewed by American Jews as a focused of Identification or as a challenge to their American Jewish identity?**

### **Course Assignments: Class Presentation and Paper:**

- Weekly reading assignments, each consists of 20-30 pages; each text will be the focus of a discussion dealing with a different American Jewish attitude toward Israel.
- Reading assignments: Students must submit 5 150-word-assignments. Assignments must be submitted until Sun. noon, 2 days before the relevant class.
- A final written assignment: a comparison between the various American Jewish attitudes toward Israel, and its perception as a challenge and/or as a focus of identification
- A discussion group (once every two weeks) in which texts relevant to class will be discussed and analyzed.

## Course Grading

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- General participation & article presentations 10%
  - Reading assignments 30%
  - Final assignment 60%
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## CALENDER

### **Week 1 (February 26, 2019): Introduction: Modern Anti-Semitism and the Jewish Quest for Belonging**

### **Week 2 (March 12, 2019): The Israeli View of Diaspora Judaism**

- Amos Oz, 'Imagining the Other', in Richard Siegel and Tamar Sofer (eds.) *The Writer in the Jewish Community: An Israeli-North American Dialogue*, Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1993, p. 115-123.

**Leading question for 1<sup>st</sup> reading assignment:** What is the Israeli view (represented by Amos Oz) regarding the prospects of Jewish survival in the United States?

### **Week 3 (March 19, 2019): "America is Different": The Prospect of Jewish Life in America:**

- Ben Halpern, "America is Different", *The American Jew – A Zionist Analysis*, New York: Herzl Press, 1956, pp. 13-33.

**Leading question for second reading assignment:** What are the differences between the American view (Ben Halpern) and Israeli view (Oz) regarding the prospects of Jewish survival in the United States?

### **Week 4 (March 26, 2019): The Prospect of Jewish survival in America:**

- Ben Halpern, "The American Jewish Problem", *The American Jew – A Zionist Analysis*, New York: Herzl Press, 1956, pp. 34-69.

**Leading question for 3<sup>rd</sup> reading assignment:** What are the differences between Halpern's views in the first and second chapters? What are the similarities and differences between the view of Halpern (second chapter) and Oz regarding this question?

### **Week 5 (April 2, 2019): Israel's foundation and the quest of reconstructing a "New Jew"**

- Mordecai M. Kaplan, "The Crisis in Zionism as Crisis in Judaism", *A New Zionism*, New York: The Herzl Press, 1954, pp. 11-46.

**Leading question for 4<sup>th</sup> reading assignment:** What is the role of Zionism in solving the crisis in Judaism?

### **Week 6 (April 24, 2019): American Zionism and Israel's negation of the exile**

- Ofer Shiff, "Reform Jewish Prophet or Zionist Leader?" *The Downfall of Abba Hillel Silver and the Foundation of Israel*, Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2014, pp. 245-270.

**Leading question for 5<sup>th</sup> reading assignment:** What is the role of Israel according to Silver? Where does he stand in comparison to Kaplan and Halpern?

### **Week 7 (April 30, 2019): "America is Different" in retrospect**

- Michael N. Barnett, "The Foreign Policies of an Uncertain People", in *The Star and the Stripes – A History of the Foreign Policies of American Jews*, pp. 243-273.

**Leading question for 6<sup>th</sup> reading assignment:** What are the similarities/differences between Kaplan's and Barnett's views of the connections between Israel and Jewish universalism?

**Week 8 (May 7, 2019): American Jewish Perspective on "Israel and the Holocaust"**

- Alan Dershowitz, *Going on Television: The Pervasiveness of Anti-Jewish Attitude, Chutzpah*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991, pp. pp. 93-129.

**Leading question for 7<sup>th</sup> reading assignment:** What are the similarities/differences between Ben Halpern and Dershowitz views of the role of Israel regarding the question of Jewish survival?

**Week 9 (May 14, 2019): Israel as a Challenge and/or as a Focus of Identification**

- Peter Beinart, *The Crisis of Zionism*, New York: Picador, 2013, pp. 1-10, 30-48.

**Leading question for 8<sup>th</sup> reading assignment:** What are the differences between Dershowitz and Beinart regarding the role of Israel and Zionism for American Jews?

**Week 10 (May 21, 2019): Israel as a Challenge and/or as a Focus of Identification – the question of Aliya (1)**

- Shaul Kelner, "Building Diaspora", in *Tours That Bind, Diaspora, Pilgrimage and Israeli Birthright Tourism*, New York: New York University Press, 2010, pp. 191-208.

**Leading question for 9<sup>th</sup> reading assignment:** Define Kelner's view of Birthright in terms of the Halpern's stand regarding the role of Israel and the Kaplan's one.

**Week 11 (May 28, 2019): Israel as a Challenge and/or as a Focus of Identification- the question of Aliya (2)**

- Ruth R. Wisse, "Prologue: Letter to a New Israeli, *If I am not for Myself – The Liberal Betrayal of the Jews*, New York: The Free Press, 1992, pp. 1-20.

**Leading question for 10<sup>th</sup> reading assignment:** Describe Wisse's Journey from childhood to the time she wrote the article in terms of Halpern's and Kaplan's stands regarding the role of Israel.

**Week 12 (June 4, 2019): Israel as a Challenge and/or as a Focus of Identification - the question of Aliya (3)**

- Alan M. Dershowitz, "Make Aliyah! The Israeli Solution to the Jewish Question of the Twenty-first Century", *The Vanishing American Jew – In Search of Jewish Identity for the next Century*, Boston and New York: Little Brown and Company, 1997, pp. 219-255

**Leading question for 11<sup>th</sup> reading assignment:** Define the differences/similarities between the two articles by Dershowitz regarding the role of Israel for diaspora Jewry.

**Week 13 (June 11, 2019): Israel as a Challenge and/or as a Focus of Identification**

- Eleanor Mallet, *Teveye's Grandchildren: Rediscovering q Jewish Identity*, Cleveland: The public Press 2004, pp. 13-17; 59-86; 99-106

**Leading question for 11<sup>th</sup> reading assignment:** please find 2-3 examples of the “Halpern’s stand” and 2-3 examples of the “Kaplan’s stand” regarding the challenges facing Jewish identity within American society. Explain the role of Israel in each category.

**Week 14 (June 18, 2019): Israel as a Challenge and/or as a Focus of Identification**

- David Ellenson, “Judaism Resurgent? American Jews and the Evolving Expression of Jewish Values and Jewish Identity in *Modern American Life*” *Public Religion and Private Faith in America and Israel* (Eli Lederhendler, ed.) *Studies in Contemporary Jewry an Annual XVII*, 156-171.