"State and Religion in Israel" (16.2.2023)

Spring Semester, 2019

Thursdays, 12:30 - 16:00

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The tension between religion and politics exists in Israeli society from its inception. It underlies debates regarding national boundaries (both social and physical), democracy and rights and even influences international relations. We will analyze institutional arrangements from separation to establishment, and we will examine the meaning of secularism as a modern project. We will explore what the formation of the modern state owes to religion, but also how the modern state transforms religion. The centrality of the Jewish religion in Israel is not limited to cultural aspects, but influences the actions of the state and its political landscape. In this course we will critically analyze this phenomenon and assess the sociological and political influence of religion on Israel's public sphere.
Course evaluation:

This class is designed as a seminar. Therefore class time is devoted to discussion between and among students and the instructor, as well as lectures. It is essential that seminar participants come to class prepared to discuss the reading material for that day’s class. Grades are based on daily participation, response papers, a book review, a short presentation and a final seminar paper. The composition of final grades and grading scale are as follows:

Class Participation (15%): Class attendance will not be taken. However, class participation is part of the final grade and you will be expected to include issues discussed during class in the final essay.

Response papers (15%): Five times, the students will prepare (in advance to class) a short response to the assigned reading (2-3 paragraphs). The response paper should show that the student is able to critically analyze and/or personally relate the work instead of just composing a restatement or summary.

Book Review (10%): Students will be required to write a critical review of literature related to the topic of the course. The literature review has to comment on one book which is NOT from the required reading list. The review should be 800 words long. The review should take a form similar to that found in academic journals. For a good example, browse an issue of Contemporary Sociology or the American Journal of Sociology (review sections are at the end). Reviews include both a summary of a book’s central argument and approach, and a discussion of the book’s contributions and shortcomings.

Midterm assignment – short presentation (10%): - Each student will be required to present his or her research project in class. The presentation should be 15 minutes long.

Final essay (50%): One 15-20 page long essay. The essay should focus on a subject discussed in the course and that is of particular interest to the student. The essay could be theoretical or practical; that is, it could highlight a theoretical debate or a specific historical event. The student should introduce new literature on the subject, and combine at least two sub-topics discussed during the course.
Course Schedule & Assigned Readings:

Each class will be divided to two parts. During the first part we will discuss the main topic of the class and the required readings. In the second part we will have a closer look at a specific contemporary debate related to the main topic.

* Additional articles and topics may be added during the course.

Class 1 / Introduction: State, Society, and Religious Institutions


Contemporary debate: Global Dimensions


Class 2 / What the Modern State Owes to Religion?


Contemporary debate: Rabbinical courts in Israel


Class 3 / Political Power and the Secular


**Contemporary debate:** Sabbath


**Class 4 / Typologies of State Regulation of Religion**


**Contemporary debate:** Religious coercion in Israel


**Class 5 / Ethnic-Democracy? Ethnocracy?**


**Contemporary debate:** The national Flag and anthem

Class 6 / The Law of Return and the "Who is a Jew" Controversy


**Contemporary debate:** Immigration from the FSU


Class 7 / Secular Identity


**Contemporary debate:** Civil Marriage


Class 7 / Israeli Traditionalists


**Contemporary debate:** Shas - The Expansion of Religious Ethnicity and its Impact on Israeli Politics


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**Class 8 / Jewish Orthodoxy and the Jewish State**


**Contemporary debate:** Equality in the burden - recruitment of Haredim to the IDF


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**Class 9 / Religious Zionism**


**Contemporary debate: Disobedience in the IDF**


**Class 10 / Reform and Conservative Judaism in Israel**


**Contemporary debate: The Wailing Wall**


**Class 11 / Non-Jews in Israel**


**Contemporary debate: Family reunification**