"The Struggle for Israeli Identity"

Spring Semester, 2012

Thursdays, 12:00 – 15:30

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

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Office hours: Beer Sheva, Main Campus Room 612, Building 72 – Wednesdays, 15:00-16:00
Sde Boker Campus, Dondish Building – Tuesdays, 14:00-15:00

Office location (Beer Sheva): Building #: 72; Room #: 612
Office location (Sde Boker): Building: Dondish, The BG Research Institute

Course Description:
We will start by analyzing the birth of Israel collective identity during the State's formative years. We will then discuss the shattering of that collective outlook in subsequent years and will proceed to examining its transformation into its current condition of a kaleidoscopic set of different and even contrasting identities. The theoretical notions of individual and collective identities will guide us throughout the course. Among the topics to be explored are: Israel's political system and society; ethnic relations in Israel; the Arab minorities in the Jewish state; is there a unique Israeli culture?; Israeli Occupation and settlement projects; the struggle for a unifying Israeli identity.

Course Objectives:
The object of this course is to provide an advanced understanding of modern Israeli politics, culture and identity(ies). The theoretical prisms of both collective and individual identities will serve us as an analytical tool in our examination of Israeli society, culture and politics.

Course Structure:
Each class will be composed of lectures, discussions and short presentations.

Total # of Credits: 4

Teaching Method:
The course will be conducted through a combination of formal lectures, independent study and class discussions. The lectures and discussions will be based on weekly reading assignments.
A broad array of genres and modes of expression - not only academic writings, but also literature, popular music, film, documentaries and art - will be incorporated into our discussion.

**Course Requirements**

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<tr>
<th>Mandatory attendance</th>
<th>-- YES</th>
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<td>Pre-requisites</td>
<td>-- NONE</td>
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**Structure of Final Course Grad**

| 1. Participation (including short presentations) | 30% |
| 2. Short reading assignments | 40% |
| 3. Final paper / presentation | 30% |

**Course Schedule Layout:**

### I. Theoretical and historical considerations

1. **March 15th**
   **Opening remarks and theoretical foundations**
   - Israel today – the complexity of contemporary Israeli society
   - Individual and collective identity formation: theoretical underpinnings
   - The Zionist Meta-narrative: basic characteristics – the *New Jew* and the return to the old-new homeland
   - "Exodus" -- the movie

2. **March 22nd**
   **Israel's formative years, 1948-1967**
   - Civil Religion in Israel and the formation of Israel’s core identity, the "*Sabra*
   - Israel’s political system
   - The three branches of government
   - The educational systems
   - Amos Oz: "Where the Jackals Howl"

### II. The great divide

3. **March 29th**
   **The watershed of 1973-1982**
   - The watershed of 1973-1982 and the shattering of the old Civil Religion of Statism and the *New Jew* myth
   - Israel as a Jewish immigrant society: Jewish-ethnic relations – the Mizrahim [I]

### III. Israel's history and identity revisited

4. **April 19th**
   **The Mizrahim [II]: the Mizrahim of today**
   - Current Mizrahi identity
   - Shas
5. **May 3rd**
   **1948 revisited**
   - The Israeli revisionist school (the "New Historians"; Post-Zionism)
   - Background to the debate on 1948
   - The debate over 1948

6. **May 10th**
   **1948 revisited [II]**
   - The debate over 1948 (cont.)
   - The Palestinian refugees
   - The presence of the *Nakba* in contemporary Israel

7. **May 17th**
   **1948 revisited**
   - The Israeli revisionist school (the "New Historians"; Post-Zionism)
   - Background to the debate on 1948

8. **May 24th**
   **The Palestinian-Arab minority in Israel**
   - The Palestinian-Arabs in Israel – history, identity
   - "The Future Vision of the Palestinian Arabs in Israel"

9. **May 31th**
    **Is Israel a colonialist state?**
    - Israel's Occupation and settlements' projects
    - The messianic component in Israeli identity and politics
    - Gush Emunim; the Ultra-Orthodox (Haredi) communities in Israel

10. **June 7th**
    **Israel's political regime; The Holocaust**
    - Different views of Israel's political regime: Jewish and Democratic, Ethnic Democracy, Ethnocracy
    - The role of the Holocaust in Israeli identity

11. **June 14th**
    **The "Russian" sub-culture in Israel; The Israeli Diaspora**
    - The "Russian" sub-culture and community in Israel
    - The Israeli Diaspora

12. **June 21th**
    **Social protests in Israel; Israeli culture; How Jewish is the Jewish state?**
    - Israeli economy, globalization in Israel; technology and environment in Israel today
    - Israel’s social protest movement of summer 2011 ("Occupy Tel Aviv")
    - Israeli film and Israeli identity
    - How Jewish is the Jewish state?
13. June 28th

Israeli culture (cont.) ; concluding session
- Israeli popular music and Israeli identity
- Israeli literature – their expression of the state’s identity and their influence on it
- Where are the Ashkenazim?

READINGS

Readings for session #1:
Recommended:
3. Alan Dowty, Israel/Palestine (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2005), pp. 1-68

Readings for session #2:

Recommended:

Readings for session #3:

Readings for session #4:

Recommended:
Readings for session #5:

Recommended:

Readings for session #6:
17. *Im Titzu* – http://en.imti.org.il/

Recommended:

Readings for session #8:

Recommended:
Readings for session #9:
Recommended:

Readings for session #10:
Recommended:

Readings for session #11:
45. Steven J. Gold, *The Israeli Diaspora* (Routledge, 2002), 1-20
Recommended:
Readings for session #12:
49. Loshitzky, Yosefa, Identity Politics on the Israeli Screen (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2001).
Recommended:

Readings for session #13:
51. Motti Regev and Edwin Seroussi, Popular Music and National Culture in Israel (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 1-14, 236-248
Recommended:

Additional Recommended Bibliography
1. Books
   3. Steven J. Gold, The Israeli Diaspora (Routledge, 2002)
   8. Ilan Pappe (ed.), The Israel/Palestine Question (London and New York: Routledge, 1999)
15. On the Israeli diaspora see *Shofar* 16.2 (1998) - a special issue called "Israel and America"

2. Scholarly Journals
   1. Israel Studies
   2. Journal of Palestine Studies
   3. Journal of Israeli History
   4. International Journal for Middle Eastern Studies
   5. Israel Affairs
   6. Azure

3. Websites
   i. Israeli newspapers and news sites: http://www.world-newspapers.com/israel.html
   ii. Palestinian newspapers and news sites: http://www.world-newspapers.com/palestine.html
   iii. Haaretz – www.haaretz.com
   iv. Al Jazeera - http://english.aljazeera.net/
   v. The Jerusalem Post -- http://www.ipost.com
   vi. Ma'ariv -- www.nrg.co.il/online/HP_0.html
   viii. Ynet -- www.ynetnews.com/home/0,7340,L-3083,00.html
   x. The Debka Files -- http://www.debka.com/
   xi. Hebrew University's Steven Spielberg Jewish Film Archive -- http://w3.castup.net/spielberg/ (The Archive has over 10,000 titles, with over 400 films currently available for viewing online in full for free)
   xii. Zochrot (Remembering) [Zochrot ["Remembering"] is a group of Israeli citizens working to raise awareness of the Nakba, the Palestinian catastrophe of 1948]: http://www.zochrot.org/index.php?lang=english

**Learning Goals:**
*By the end of the course, you should be able to:*
• Define and describe major events in the history of modern Israel
• Define and describe Israel's political regime (political parties, municipal and regional administration, etc.)
• Define, describe and appraise the major analytical terms used in our course
• Integrate course data into a coherent narrative(s) of current Israeli identity(ies)

Cell phones and laptops policy:

Cell phones: Use of cell phones in class (for talking, texting, reading/writing email, or any other purpose) is prohibited. Kindly keep your cell phones turned off and stowed away in class. However, if you need to leave your cell phone on because of an ongoing emergency situation, please speak to me at the start of class.

Laptops: Kindly keep your laptop turned off and stowed away in class. Using laptop computers in class is permitted only for taking notes pertaining to our discussion, or for independent work related to the course.

Possible topics for classroom presentations

• Israel's political system
• Israel's educational systems
• Israeli military
• Globalization and Israel
• Israel's municipal and regional systems
• The postzionism debate
• The Israeli economy
• Israel's settlement projects and colonialism
• How Jewish is the Jewish State?
• The Holocaust in Israeli identity
• The Israeli Diaspora
• Jewish-ethnic groups in Israel
• The Ultra-Orthodox sub-culture in Israel
• Civil society in Israel [NGOs, etc.]
• The Palestinian-Arab minority in Israel
• 'Ethnic democracy' versus 'ethnocracy'
• 'Jewish and democratic' versus 'a state for all its citizens'
• Israeli popular music as a reflection of the country's identity
• Israeli literature and Israeli identity
• Israel and the Jewish-Diaspora relations
• The development of Israel's culinary as an expression of its identity
• The Israeli-Palestinian ethnic and national conflict in comparative perspective:
  • Cyprus
  • Sri Lanka
  • Former Yugoslavia
  • South Africa
  • Northern Ireland
  • French Algeria
  • Former Soviet Union
  • The Balkans
  • Africa