The Struggle for Israeli Identity

This is a tentative syllabus!
Changes to the syllabus might be done in accordance with the class’s make-up and previous knowledge

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The object of this course is to provide a basic understanding of modern Israeli politics, culture and identity through lectures, discussions and projects. 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 Israel's identity. 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.

CLASS SCHEDULE

I. Theoretical and historical considerations
   1. Opening remarks: Israel today – the complexity of contemporary Israeli society.
      Individual and collective identity formation: theoretical underpinnings. Palestine and
      the Palestinians before Zionism; the Zionist Meta-narrative: basic characteristics of the
      Zionist meta-narrative – the New Jew and the return to the old-new homeland; the
      Zionist movement; Zionist colonization; the British Mandate period (1917-1948)
   2. World War Two – the Holocaust; 1948 -- the establishment of the State of Israel and
      the Palestinian "catastrophe" (al Nakba); A brief survey of Israel's wars, 1948-present;
      Israel’s formative years, 1948-1967 [I]: Civil Religion in Israel and the formation of
      Israel’s core identity, the "Sabra"
   3. Israel’s formative years, 1948-1967 [II], political, social and geographical foundations:
      Israel’s political and municipal systems; the three branches of government; the
      educational systems; the military; the economy; types of urban and agricultural
      settlements: kibbutz, moshav, development towns, major cities, the Arab towns and
      villages; post 1948 Jewish immigration to Israel
      [depending on the make-up of the class, this topic can be shortened. In that case, we
      will quickly move to the next sessions’ topic]

II. The great divide
4. The watershed of 1973-1982 and the shattering of the old civil religion and the New Jew myth; questioning the accepted meta-narrative - the Postzionist intellectual revolution; 
Israel as a Jewish immigrant society: Jewish-ethnic relations – the Mizrahim [I]

III. Israel's history and identity revisited
5. The Mizrahim [II]: the Mizrahim of today; The "Russian" sub-culture and community in Israel; the role of the Holocaust in Israeli identity;

6. 1948 revisited: the debate over the 1948 war, the Palestinian refugees; the presence of the Nakba in contemporary Israel

7. The Palestinian-Arab minority in Israel – history, identity; "The Future Vision of the Palestinian Arabs in Israel"

8. 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; Is Israel a Jewish state?

9. Different views of Israel's political regime: Jewish and Democratic, Ethnic Democracy, Ethnocracy. Israeli economy, globalization in Israel; technology and environment in Israel today;

10. The Israeli Diaspora; Israel’s social protest movement of summer 2011 (“Occupy Tel Aviv”);

11. Culture: Israeli popular music; Israeli film; Israeli literature – their expression of the state’s identity and their influence on it

12. Concluding session: presentations of final papers

**READINGS**

Readings for session #1:
Recommended:

Readings for session #2:

Recommended:

Readings for session #3:

**Readings for session #4:**


**Recommended:**


**Readings for session #5:**


**Recommended:**


**Readings for session #6:**


**Recommended:**

Readings for session #7:

Recommended:

Readings for session #8:

Recommended:

Readings for session #9:

Readings for session #10:
45. Steven J. Gold, The Israeli Diaspora (Routledge, 2002), 1-20

Readings for session #11:
47. Motti Regev and Edwin Seroussi, Popular Music and National Culture in Israel (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 1-14, 236-248

Readings for session #12:
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](http://www.world-newspapers.com/israel.html)
   iii. Haaretz – [www.haaretz.com](http://www.haaretz.com)
   v. The Jerusalem Post -- [http://www.jpost.com](http://www.jpost.com)
   vi. Ma'ariv -- [www.nrg.co.il/online/HP_0.html](http://www.nrg.co.il/online/HP_0.html)
   viii. Ynet -- [www.ynetnews.com/home/0,7340,L-3083,00.html](http://www.ynetnews.com/home/0,7340,L-3083,00.html)
   xi. Hebrew University's Steven Spielberg Jewish Film Archive -- [http://w3.castup.net/spielberg/](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](http://www.zochrot.org/index.php?lang=english)
CIA World Factbook – Israel:

**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)

**Grading and Assignments:**
- Attendance is mandatory
- Readings' assignments – [30%]
- Class participation and classroom presentations [30%]
- Final paper [45%]

**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 distracting to me and other students, in part because the temptation to take “just a second” to check email or web updates is hard to resist.

**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