

**001-2-6045 - Communities and Landscapes of the Negev:
Contradictions, Frictions, and Connections**

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Dr. Yaakov Garb & Dr. Alexander Koenler

Course Description:

The Negev, a complex biophysical landscape with a deep history of human habitation, is currently one of the regions with the most remarkable socio-cultural mixes in the world. In this course, we consider the Negev and its remarkable heterogeneity as a prism to understand the intertwining of places and peoples in a globalized world. The Negev region's internal dynamics are, also, strongly tied to broader Israeli national aspirations and forces, while participating within larger cross-border and international currents. The Middle East's largest and most sophisticated nuclear reactor sits alongside the hub of an ancient caravan trade route that linked the Arabian peninsula to the Mediterranean, Africa and southern India. Bedouin families whose access to land and livelihood is highly contested, live adjacent to a new generation of single family ranches offering wine and cheese to well to do weekend visitors from Israel's geographical center. Each of these groups draw on the material and symbolic resources of the Negev landscape, and each projects their and the region's future in a different way.

These deep connections make the Negev a remarkably dynamic and passionately contested site. This course gives participants an introduction to some key places, communities, and themes of the Negev, while developing conceptual and methodological skills for examining them. In particular, we will explore the Negev as the product of the entangled histories of nation building, political/economic transformations, and ethnic formations that have made the region rich with overlapping histories and tense with political contradictions.

Course Objectives:

Our course will borrow lenses from sociology, anthropology, and policy inquiry, and learning will take place through lectures, readings, field trips, and discussion. Since the Negev may be like other places, but is unique in many ways, our survey will be rooted in the particulars of the places and people we encounter, as revealed through a series concrete case studies. While many sites and issues could serve as possible entry points for the themes of this course, the ones we will examine (Bedouin, desertification, development towns, Black Hebrews) are chosen to illustrate the breadth and complex layering of the Negev's social landscapes. At the same time, our readings will introduce the notions of narrative and framing as conceptual tools to make sense of conflicting perceptions and claims on the region. Throughout we will be attentive to the interconnections between local national and global forces at play in the Negev. We will consider themes such as the following:

- The role of space in stratification and segregation
- The role of symbolic landscapes locally and in the national imagination, practices and policies
- Access to land resources, definitions ownership, and how these are determined

- The relation between ethnic belonging, identity politics and conflict, and how these play out spatially
- How social movements and non-governmental organizations work as new political actors with and within other, more consolidated power relations
- The dynamics and challenge of traditionally nomadic people undergoing and confronting sedentarization and urbanization processes