Sde Boker Campus

Dr. Ofer Shiff  
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Office hours: Beer Sheva, Main Campus Room 620, Building 72 – Monday 12:00 – 13:00; Sde Boker Campus – Tuesday 12:30-14:00

Seminar Description:
The course will examine the changing perceptions of Israel from 1947 up to date, as seen from the perspective of various Jewish Diasporas. Focusing on the transition between pre- and post-statehood, the students will explore the complex interconnection between the Diaspora concept of Jewish sovereignty and the changing status of Diaspora Jews within their non-Jewish surroundings. While examining these issues through the lens of American Jewry, as the largest Diaspora community, the course will discuss additional Jewish Diasporas, mainly those in Europe and South America.

Course Objectives:
The aim of this course is to acquaint the students with the variety of perspectives of Israel and its role within Diaspora Jewish discourse.

Method of Teaching:
The seminar is based on the introduction of a variety of primary and secondary texts dealing with Diaspora perspective of Israel and Jewish sovereignty. Throughout the course the students will each be assigned two entries from the reading list, and to present them in class. At the end of the course, students will be required to submit a written paper on Diaspora perception of Israel and of its role within current Jewish discourse. In the Final Paper the students will have to demonstrate their ability to acutely define a relevant research question, to survey the available primary and secondary materials, and to discuss the main questions and issues necessary for the analysis of these texts.
Course Requirements
Compulsory Attendance: YES
Pre-requisites: NONE

Structure of Final Course Grad
1. Two Class-Presentations 30% (15% each)
2. Final Paper 70%
100%

Course Schedule Layout:

Week 1: March 13, 2012
Weekly subject title: Israel's Foundation as an Ideological Crisis within Diaspora Zionism

Weeks 2-3: March 20, 2012; March 27, 2012
Weekly subject title: Diaspora-Homeland Relations – A Theoretical Framework
Reading:

Week 4: April 3, 2012
Weekly subject title: The Role of Israel within American Zionist Discourse.
Reading:
  a. Ofer Shiff, Abba Hillel Silver The Defeated Zionist, Syracuse University Press (to be published)

Weeks 5-6: April 17, 2012
Weekly subject title: Failed Attempts to Decenter National Life
Readings: Noam Pianko, Zionism, the Roads not Taken, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2010

Weeks 7-8: April 24, 2012; May 1, 2012
Weekly subject title: Engagement or Interference – Israel Becomes an Ideological and Political Challenge
Reading:
Week 9: May 6, 2012
Weekly subject title: Post 1948 European Jewry
Readings:
  a. Sergio Della Pergola, "Jews in Europe: Demographic Trends, Contexts and Outlooks", A Road to Nowhere? Jewish Experienced in Unifying Europe (Julius H. Schoeps and Olaf Glockner eds), Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2010, pp. 3-34
  b. Gabriel Sheffer, "The European Jewish Diaspora: The Third Pillar of World Jewry?" A Road to Nowhere? Jewish Experienced in Unifying Europe, pp. 35-44

Week 10: May 15, 2012
Weekly subject title: Anglo Jewry and the State of Israel

Week 11: May 22, 2012
Weekly subject title: Latin America Jewry
Readings:

Weekly subject title: Images and Vision of Israel
Reading:

Week 14: June 12, 2012
Weekly subject title: Homeland and Diaspora Jewish Experiences