Israel Studies International MA Program
Ben-Gurion University of the Negev

Antisemitism, the Holocaust and Israel-Diaspora Relations
Spring Semester 2023

Thursday, 10.00 am – 1400: pm
Sde Boker Campus, The Ben Gurion Research Institute for the Study of Israel and Zionism

Prof. Ofer Shiff
Email: oschiff@gmail.com
Phone: 050 -2143452

Course Objectives:
The aim of this course is to acquaint the students with a variety of Israeli and American Jewish perspectives regarding antisemitism and the Holocaust, and how these very different’ sometime conflicting perspectives impact Israel-Diaspora relations, especially the changing view of the state of Israel and its global Jewish roles.

Course Assignments: Class Presentation and Paper:
- Weekly reading assignments: each text will be the focus of a discussion dealing with a different American Jewish perspective regarding antisemitism, the Holocaust and Israel.
- Written assignments: Students must submit 5 one-page-assignments. Assignments must be submitted by Tuesday noon, 2 days before the relevant class.
- A final written assignment: a comparison between the various American Jewish perspectives perspective regarding antisemitism, the Holocaust and Israel.
Course Grading

- General participation & article presentations 10%
- Weekly assignments 30%
- Final assignment 60%

CALENDER

Week 1 (March 9, 2023): Introduction: Modern Anti-Semitism and the Jewish Quest for Belonging

Week 2 (March 16, 2023): The Israeli View of Diaspora Judaism


Leading question for 1st reading assignment: What is the Israeli view (represented by Amos Oz) regarding the prospects of Jewish survival in the United States?

Week 3 (March 23, 2023): “America is Different”: The Prospect of Jewish Life in America:


Leading question for second reading assignment: What are the differences between the American view (Ben Halpern) and Israeli view (Oz) regarding the prospects of Jewish survival in the United States?

Week 4 (March 30, 2023): The Prospect of Jewish survival in America:


Leading question for 3rd reading assignment: What are the differences between Halpern’s views in the first and second chapters? What are the similarities and differences between the view of Halpern (second chapter) and Oz regarding this question?

Week 5 (April 13, 2023): Israel's foundation and the quest of reconstructing a "New Jew"


Leading question for 4th reading assignment: What is the role of Zionism in solving the crisis in Judaism?

Week 6 (April 20, 2023): American Zionism and Israel's negation of the exile

- Ofer Shiff, "Reform Jewish Prophet or Zionist Leader?" The Downfall of Abba Hillel Silver and the Foundation of Israel, Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2014, pp. 245-270.

Leading question for 5th reading assignment: What is the role of Israel according to Silver? Where does he stand in comparison to Kaplan and Halpern?

Week 7 (April 27, 2023): “American is Different” in retrospect.

Leading question for 6th reading assignment: What are the similarities/differences between Kaplan’s and Barnett’s views of the connections between Israel and Jewish universalism?

Week 8 (May 4, 2023): American Jewish Perspective on "Israel and the Holocaust"

Leading question for 7th reading assignment: What are the similarities/differences between Ben Halpern and Dershowitz views of the role of Israel regarding the question of Jewish survival?

Week 9 (May 11, 2023): Israel as a Challenge and/or as a Focus of Identification

Leading question for 8th reading assignment: What are the differences between Dershowitz and Beinart regarding the role of Israel and Zionism for American Jews?

Week 10 (May 18, 2023): Israel as a Challenge and/or as a Focus of Identification – the question of Aliyya (1)

Leading question for 9th reading assignment: Define Kelner’s view of Birthright in terms of the Halpern’s stand regarding the role of Israel and the Kaplan's one.

Week 11 (May 25, 2023): Israel as a Challenge and/or as a Focus of Identification- the question of Aliyya (2)

Leading question for 10th reading assignment: Define Wisse’s Journey from childhood to the time she wrote the article in terms of the Halpern’s stand regarding the role of Israel and the Kaplan's one.

Week 12 (June 1, 2023): Israel as a Challenge and/or as a Focus of Identification - the question of Aliyya (3)

Leading question for 11th reading assignment: Define the differences/similarities between the two articles by Dershowitz regarding the role of Israel for diaspora Jewry.
Week 13 (June 8, 2023): Israel as a Challenge and/or as a Focus of Identification


Leading question for 11th reading assignment: please find 2-3 examples of the “Halpern’s stand” and 2-3 examples of the “Kaplan’s stand” regarding the challenges facing Jewish identity within American society. Explain the role of Israel in each category.

Week 14 (June 15, 2023): Summary 1


Week 15 (June 22, 2023): Summary 2