



Ben-Gurion University of the Negev  
The Ben-Gurion Research Institute for the Study of Israel & Zionism  
ISIP

## **Israel from a Multi-disciplinary Perspective: Selected Issues**

### **Sde Boker Campus**

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**Office hours & location:** Sde Boker Campus, The BG Research Institute, Dondish Building, Tuesday 72 – Monday 1230 – 14:00

#### **Course Description:**

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Israel Studies are a multi-disciplinary practice. Intensive Academic discourse on Israel is been conducted involving various disciplines: History, Sociology, Political science, Philosophy, Cultural Studies, Geography, literature and more. The course will explore this multi-disciplinary character of the academic discourse on Israel by focusing on four lines of debate: understanding Israel as either a national phenomenon or a colonialist one; idea and power in the history of the Zionist movement, the pre-state *Yishuv* and Israel; the 'oriental question' in Israel's first decade; Israel's self definition as both Jewish and democratic republic. These debates will be addressed by general lectures and by reading and presenting selective texts.

#### **Course Objectives:**

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The course is an introductory one, aiming to exemplify the interrelation between the different disciplines that are used within the field of 'Israel Studies' and to provide basic understanding of the debates that will be discussed.

#### **Course Structure:**

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Each course meeting will includes a **lecture** or a **presentation** of a text that will be followed by a **discussion**.

**Total # of Credits: 4**

#### **Course Requirements**

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Compulsory attendance **YES**

Pre-requisites: **NONE**

## **Structure of Final Course Grad**

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1. Participation	20%
2. Final short paper	<u>80%</u>
	100%

## **Course Schedule Layout:**

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### **Week 1 [November 1<sup>st</sup>]**

#### **Introduction**

- The definition of disciplines by the basic questions they address or by their subject-matter
- The academic origins of 'Israel Studies': Judaic Studies; Modern Jewish history and sociology; the study of Zionism and pre-state *Yishuv*
- 'Israel Studies' as a multi-disciplinary academic field

### **Week 2-4 [November 8<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>, 22<sup>th</sup>]**

#### **Zionism and Israel between nationalism and colonialism**

- Negating Nationalism – liberal, Marxist, Pacifist and Religious origins
- Negating Jewish Nationalism
- The 'colonialist school' in explaining Zionism and Israel and its critique of the 'national school'
- Critique of the 'colonial school'

#### **Readings:**

- Gershon Shafir, *Land, Labor and the Origins of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict 1882-1914*, Cambridge 1989.
- Moshe Lissak, "'Critical' Sociologists and 'Establishment' Sociologists in the Israeli Academic Community: Ideological Struggles or an Academic Discourse?' Pinhas Ginosar, Avi Bareli (eds.), *Zionism: A contemporary Controversy*, Iyunim Bitkumat Israel, Thematic Series, Sde-Boker 1996, pp. 60-98.
- Avi Bareli, 'Forgetting Europe: Perspectives on the Debate about Zionism and Colonialism', *The Journal of Israeli History*, vol. 20, no. 2/3, Summer/Autumn 2001, pp. 99-120.
- Ran Aronsohn, 'Settling Eretz-Israel – A Colonial Enterprise?' Pinhas Ginosar, Avi Bareli (eds.), *Zionism: A contemporary Controversy*, Iyunim Bitkumat Israel, Thematic Series, Sde-Boker 1996, pp. 340-354.

### **Week 5-7 [November 29<sup>th</sup>, December 6<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup>]**

#### **Idea and Power in pre-state *Yishuv* and in early independence**

- The conflict interpretation of the Zionist project
- The ideological-functional interpretation of the Zionist project
- Sovereign power as the focus of the Zionist project and ideology
- A test case: early labor Zionism and the establishment of a Jewish polity in Palestine

#### **Readings:**

- David Vital, *The Origins of Zionism*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1975.
- Anita Shapira, *Land and power: the Zionist resort to force, 1881-1948*, New York : Oxford University Press, 1992.
- Yonathan Shapiro, *The Formative years of the Israeli Labour Party: the organization of power, 1919-1930*, London : Sage Publications, c1976.
- Yosef Gorny, *Achduth Ha'avoda 1919-1930*, Tel-Aviv: Hkibbutz Hame'uhad, 1973 (Hebrew).

### **Week 8-10 [December 20<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup>, January 3<sup>th</sup>]**

#### **The 'oriental question' in Israel's first decade**

- *Ashkenazi, Sephardic, Mizrahi* – some terminological and historical remarks
- The Middle-eastern Jews and the Zionist project before 1948
- The great transfer of the Middle-eastern Jews into Israel during the 50's and the 60's
- Class and cultural relations between *Ashkenazi* and *Sephardic* Jews in Israel

#### **Readings:**

- Shlomo Swirski, *Seeds of Inequality*, Tel-Aviv: Breirot, 1995 (Hebrew).
- Shlomo Swirski, *Orientalism and Ashkenazim in Israel: The Ethnic Division of Labor Haifa: Machbarot Le'mechkar Ule'bikoret*, 1981 (Hebrew)
- Ela Shohat, 'Sepharadim in Israel: Zionism from the Standpoint of its Jewish Victims', *Social Text*, vol. 19\20 Fall, 1988.
- Avi Bareli, 'Mapai and the Oriental Jewish Question in the Early Years of the State', *Jewish Social Studies: History, Culture, Society* n.s. 16, no.1 (Fall 2009), pp. 54-84.

### **Week 11-13 [January 10<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>, 24<sup>th</sup>]**

#### **Israel's self-definition as a Jewish and democratic state**

- Nation-states and democracy – inter-dependence or inner conflict?
- Particularistic and Universalistic patterns in modern Nationalism
- The democratic character of the Zionist process of nation building – practical and ideological aspects
- Israel's national self-definition in a comparative perspective
- The concept of *Mamlachtiyut* – an Israeli version to democratic republicanism

#### **Readings:**

- Alexander Yakobson & Amnon Rubinstein, *Israel and the Family of Nations*, London & New York: Routledge, 2009.
- Gershon Shafir, Yoav Peled, *Being Israeli: the dynamics of multiple citizenship*, Cambridge ; New York : Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Joseph Agassi, *Between Nation and Religion: Towards Israeli National Identity*, Tel-Aviv 1984.

### **Additional recommended Bibliography**

- Shlomo Avineri, *The making of modern Zionism: the intellectual origins of the Jewish State*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, c1981.
- Howard Sachar, *A History of Israel: From the rise of Zionism to our Time*, New York: Knopf. 1996 or 2007 [2nd or 3rd edition]
- Gideon Shimon, *The Zionist ideology*, Hanover, NH : University of New England Press, 1995 Hanover, NH : University of New England Press, 1995.
- Michael Bar-Zohar, *Ben-Gurion : a Biography*. New York: Adama Books, 1986. pp. 121-124.
- Maurizio Viroli, *Republicanism* (Anthony Shuggaar tr.) New York: Hill and Wang, 2002.
- Philippe Pettit, *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government*, Oxford: Clarendon 1997.
- Martin Seliger, *Ideology and Politics*. New York: Free Press, 1976.
- Sammy Smooha, *Israel—Pluralism and Conflict*, London, 1978.
- Baruch Kimmerling (ed.), *The Israeli state and society: boundaries and frontiers*, Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, c1989.