

Government and Politics in Israel

PLS 389N- JUST 386B Fall 2011 (An undergraduate intermediate level course)

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Class Meeting: MWF 8:30-9:30

Class Location: SL 210

Office Hours: M 10:00-12:00

Course Description:

The institutional setting that defines the rules of the political game in Israel is complicated, mostly unstructured, based on many veto players and agenda setters showing a constant conflict between the dynamics of change and stagnation. The players in this setting (individuals and organizations alike) maneuver within political, social and economic crises, while trying to mitigate the tensions within a society characterized with overlapping and cross-cutting cleavages. This complexity and plethora of social conflicts have led scholars to propose two claims which are salient in the Israel studies literature. The first is that Israel is *sui-generis*. Hence, it should be studied as a unique case that cannot be compared to other cases. The second is that Israel is not a democracy. Rather, it is at best an ethnic democracy or even an ethnocracy. While presenting both these claims and their logic, this course takes a different perspective.

Using the conceptual toolbox brought forth by rational-choice institutionalism, this course shows that the different components of the Israeli political system can (and should) be compared to other democratic settings. That is, we use the main components of the Austen-Smith and Banks *Legislative Game* and others developed in its light. This game was designed for the study of multiparty competitive political settings. It assumes that politics is a strategic interaction played by resources-seeking

individuals and organizations. Thus, politics should be studied on the basis of the analysis of players' preferences and the specific institutional rules in that setting (i.e. the electoral method, the decision making mechanism in parliament and the way coalitions are sustained). Understanding these features of the political interaction allows us to comprehend the strategic choices participants in this interaction make in the pre-electoral phase, the Election Day, the coalitional process and the actual legislation.

For the Israeli case, each player type (voters, activists, party elites, parties, members of Knesset and their factions, government ministers, premiers and judges) will be analyzed theoretically using rational-choice institutionalism concepts, comparative data and in-depth empirical study (qualitative and quantitative) of the Israeli case. That analysis will show that although Israel has more to achieve in terms of liberal democracy, it is not a polity which does not belong to the family of democratic nations. Moreover, it shows that the Israeli case should be included in the comparative analysis of polities as whole and democratic polities in particular. That said, the social problems, lack of solidarity and inequality between Jews and Arabs as well as within the Jewish population will be presented and discussed. Specifically, we will study:

- The historical and sociological sources of Israel's polity.
- Discussion of the controversy regarding Israel's democratic nature.
- Israeli society's political preferences: overlapping and crosscutting social cleavages, social solidarity, and implications on politics.
- Israel's parties: players, policy positions and intraparty power relations.
- The (non) constitutional arrangements which define the Israeli political institutional setting.
- Judicial institutions in Israel and their struggle for power in the political process.
- The electoral method and its strategic implications for voters and parties.
- Israel's Parliament (Knesset): agenda setting, fragmentation and cohesiveness.

- Israel's government coalitions: (in)decisiveness, (i)resoluteness and (in)stability.
- The policy process in Israel: politicians, bureaucrats and interest groups.
- If time is left: discussion of the coalition politics accompanying the conflict resolution process between Jews and Arabs.

Readings

These books are the basic texts we use in this course and they are available at the University Book Store:

Arian, A. (2005). *Politics in Israel: The Second Republic*. Washington DC: CQ Press.
 Shepse, K.A. (2010). *Analyzing Politics*. New York: WW Norton & Co. 2nd ed.

Also, we will use the following book:

Bard, M. G. and D. Nachmias (Eds.) (2009). *Israel Studies: An Anthology*. DC: Jewish Virtual Library, 2009.

It is accessible online at:

<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/isdf/text/anthologytoc.html?352,279>

I will use quite a lot of research and review papers. Most of these papers are available through JSTOR. Others which are conference papers and working papers will be uploaded to the BlackBoard. One more note- in some of these papers there are formal models that include (daunting) mathematical equations and (fearsome) statistical analyses. I know that most of you are not trained in this math or stats but the papers include verbal presentations of most claims and findings so you can stick to those while reading, writing the critical reading assignments, preparing to the test etc. Those who are thinking of pursuing graduate level training in Political Science (or nowadays almost any other social sciences advanced training) this might be a good option for you to see if this direction works for you.

This is the reading list according to the order of meetings we will have. The complete bibliography appears after the table:

Week	Meeting	Date	Topic	Readings and Assignment
1	1	29/8	Israel: Basic facts and information	Arian ch.2 Gerring, 2004
	2	31	Israel government and politics: Identity and legitimacy	Arian ch. 1 Maor, 2009 (R)
	3	2/9		No meeting APSA
2	4	5		No meeting Labor day
	5	7	Israel government institutions: basic overview	Nachmias, 2009 (in Nachmias and Bard)
	6	9	The basic controversy: Is Israel a democracy?	Smooha, 2002
3	7	12	The basic controversy: Is Israel a democracy?	Peled, 2008 Yiftachel and Ghanem, 2004
	8	14	A positivist approach for the study of government and politics in Israel	Dowty, 1999
	9	16	Taking a couple of steps back: What is a democracy?	Lijphart, 1991
4	10	19	Taking a couple of steps back: What is a democracy?	Huber and Powel, 1994
	11	21	Taking a couple of steps back: What is a democracy?	Shepsle and Boncheck ch. 1&2
	12	23	Taking a couple of steps back: What is a democracy?	Shepsle & Boncheck ch. 3; Przeworski, 2003
5	13	26	Social cleavages and politics	Selway 2010 Lee and Roemer 2006
	14	28	Social Cleavages in Israel	Adler et. al. 2005

	15	30	Social cleavages and politics in Israel	Arian and Shamir, 1999; 2008(R) Submission of 1st assignment
6	16	3/10	Main Players: Political Parties in Israel	Arian, ch. 5
	17	5	Party Organizations in Israel	Arian, ch. 6
	18	7	Parties in an analytic perspective	Doron, 2005 Roemer, 1998 (R)
7	19	10	Political institutions: basics	Shepsle & Boncheck ch. 8
	20	12	Political institutions: basics	Shepsle & Boncheck ch. 9; 11
	21	14	Political institutions: constitutions in a comparative perspective	Lerner, 2010
8	22	17	Political institutions: constitutions in an analytic perspective	Weingast, 1997
	23	19	Political institutions: Israel's non-constitution	Rubinstein, 2009 (in Nachmias and Bard)
	24	21	Political institutions: Courts	Shepsle and Boncheck ch. 15
9	25	24	Political institutions: Courts in Israel	Arian, 298-312 Barak, 2009 (In: Nachmias and Bard)
	26	26	Political institutions: Courts in Israel	Mizrachi and Meidani, 2009
	27	28	Political institutions: Electoral system in a comparative perspective	Golder, 2005
10	28	31/10	Political institutions: Electoral system in an analytic	Shepsle and Boncheck, ch. 7 Tsebelis and Chang, 2004

			perspective	
	29	2/11	Political institutions: Electoral method in Israel	Arian, ch. 7
	30	4	Political institutions: Electoral method in Israel	Doron and Maor, 1991 Zubida and Doron, 2009
11	31	7	Electoral Behavior: comparative and analytic perspective	Roemer, 1997 Schofield and Sened, 1998
	32	9	Electoral behavior in Israel	Arian, ch. 8
	33	11	Electoral behavior in Israel: analytic perspective	Schofield and Sened, 1999 Nachmias, Rosenthal and Zubida, 2011 (R) Submission of 2nd assignment
12	34	14	Political institutions: Parliaments	Shepsle and Boncheck, ch. 12
	35	16	Political institutions: the Israeli Knesset	Arian: 282-297 Rahat, 2007
	36	18	The Knesset in analytic perspective	Rosenthal, 2009
13	37	21	Political Coalitions: analytics	Austen-Smith and Banks, 1988 Shepsle and Boncheck, ch. 16
	38	23	Political Coalitions: analytics	Schofield, 1995 Sened, 1996a
	39	25		No Meeting Thanksgiving
14	40	28	Political Coalitions in Israel	Arian: 264-281 Nachmias and Sened, 2001
	41	30	Public policy in multiparty parliamentary regimes	Huber and Lupia, 2001
	42	2/12	Public policy in	Arian, ch. 10-11

			Israel	Submission of group project
15	43	5	Public policy in Israel	Nachmias and Arbel-Ganz, 2005
	44	7	Oh yes, what about that conflict?	Rosenthal and Doron, 2009
	45	9	General overview: taking it back to Dowty	Doron and Rosenthal, 2011 (R)
				Last day of classes

(R) Means recommended items

Complete Bibliography

- Adler, I. Lewin-Epstein, N. & Y. Shavit (2005). "Ethnic Stratification and Place of Residence in Israel: A Truism Revisited". *Research in Social Stratification and Mobility* 23: 155–190
- Arian, A. and M. Shamir (2008). "A Decade Later, the World Had Changed, the Cleavage Structure Remained Israel 1996—2006". *Party Politics* 14(6): 685-705.
- Austen-Smith, D. and J. Banks (1988). "Elections, Coalitions and Legislative Outcomes." *American Political Science Review*. 82(2): 405-422.
- Barak, A. (2009). "The Values of the State of Israel as a Jewish and a Democratic State". In: Bard and Nachmias.
- Dowty, A. (1999). "Is Israel Democratic? Substance and Semantics in the "Ethnic Democracy" Debate". *Israel Studies* 4(2): 1-15.
- Doron, G. and M. Maor (1991). "Barriers to Entry into a Political System A Theoretical Framework and Empirical Application from the Israeli Experience". *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 3(2): 175-188.
- Doron, G. (2005). "Right as Opposed to Wrong as Opposed to Left The Spatial Location of "Right Parties" on the Israeli Political Map". *Israel Studies* 10(3): 29-53
- Doron, G. and M. Rosenthal (2011). "Intra-Domestic Bargaining over the Lands and the Future: Israel's Policy towards the 1967 Occupied Territories" (with Gideon Doron). In: D. Bartal & I. Schnell (eds.). *40 Years to Israeli Occupation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. (will be uploaded to the website)
- Gerring, J. (2004). "What is a Case Study and What is it Good For". *American Political Science Review*, 98(2): 341-354.
- Golder, M. (2005). "Democratic electoral systems around the world, 1946–2000". *Electoral Studies* 24 (1): 103–121
- Huber J. and B. Powell (1994). "Congruence between Citizens and Policymakers in Two Visions of Liberal Democracies". *World Politics*, 46(3): 291-326.
- Huber, John D. & Arthur Lupia. 2001. "Cabinet Instability and Delegation in Parliamentary Democracies". *American Journal of Political Science*. 54(1):18- 32.
- Lee, W. and J.E. Roemer (2006). "Race and redistribution in the United States: A solution to the problem of American exceptionalism". *Journal of Public Economics* 90: 1027-1052

- Lerner, H. (2010). "Constitution-writing in deeply divided societies: the incrementalist approach". *Nations and Nationalism* 16 (1), 2010, 68–88.
- Lijphart, A. (1991). "Constitutional Choices for New Democracies". *Journal of Democracy* 2(1): 72-84
- Maor, M. (2009). "The History of Zionism". In: Bard and Nachmias.
- Meydani, A. and S. Mizrahi (2010). "The Relationship Between the Supreme Court and Parliament in Light of the Theory of Moves: the Case of Israel". *Rationality and Society*, 22 (1): 55 – 82.
- Nachmias, D. and I. Sened. (2001). "Governance and Public Policy". *Israel Affairs* 7(4): 3-20.
- Nachmias, D. & Arbel-Gantz, O. (2005). "The Crisis of Governance: Government Instability and the Civil Service". *Israel Affairs* , 11(2): 281-302.
- Nachmias, D. (2009). "National Government Institutions". In: Bard and Nachmias.
- Nachmias, D., M. Rosenthal and H. Zubida (2011). "National Party Strategies in Local Elections: A Theory and Some Evidence from the Israeli Case". *American Political Science Association Annual Meeting*. Seattle: Washington.
- Peled, Y. (2008). "The evolution of Israeli citizenship: an overview". *Citizenship Studies*, 12(3): 335–345
- Przeworski, A. (2003). "Freedom to Choose and Democracy." *Economics and Philosophy* 19: 265-279.
- Rahat, G. (2007). "Determinants of Party Cohesion: Evidence from the Case of the Israeli Parliament". *Parliamentary Affairs*. 60(2): 279-296
- Roemer, J.E. (1997). "Political-economic equilibrium when parties represent constituents: The unidimensional case," *Social Choice and Welfare*, 14(4): 479-502.
- Roemer, J. E. (1998). "Why the poor do not expropriate the rich: An old argument in new garb". *Journal of Public Economics* 70 (3), pp 399-424.
- Rosenthal, M. (2009). "Heresthetic in Policy Making Processes: A Theory and Application to Israeli Knesset Committees." Mediterranean Program, *European University Institute, 10th Mediterranean Research Meeting*.
- Rosenthal, M. and G. Doron (2009). Israel's 1993 Decision to Make Peace with the PLO or How Political Losers (this time) Became Winners. *International Negotiation: a Journal of Theory and Practice* 14(3): 449-474.

- Rosenthal, M. (2010). "Agenda Control in an Unstable Parliamentary Democracy: Evidence from the Israeli Public Sector". *European Public Choice Society Annual Meeting*.
- Rubinstein, A. (2009). "Israel's Partial Constitution: The Basic Laws". In: Bard and Nachmias.
- Sened, I. 1995. Equilibria in Weighted Voting Games with Side Payments, *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 7:283-300.
- Schofield, N. J. 1995. Coalition Politics: A Formal Model and Empirical Analysis. *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 7(3): 245-281.
- Schofield, N. J. and I. Sened (2005). "Multiparty Competition in Israel, 1988–96". *British Journal of Political Science*, 35(4): 635-663
- Schofield, N. J. and I. Sened (2005). "Modeling the Interaction of Parties, Activists and Voters: Why is the Political Center so Empty?" *European Journal of Political Research* 44(3), 355-90.
- Selway, J.S. (2011). "The Measurement of Cross-cutting Cleavages and Other Multidimensional Cleavage Structures." *Political Analysis*, vol. 19, no. 1, pp. 48 – 65.
- Shamir, M. and Arian, A. (1999). "Collective Identities and Electoral Competition in Israel". *American Political Science Review*. 93(2): 265-277.
- Smootha, S. (2002). ' The model of ethnic democracy: Israel as a Jewish and democratic state'. *Nations and Nationalism*. 8(4): 475-503
- Tsebelis, G. and E.C.C. Chang (2004). "Veto Players and the Structure of Budgets in Advanced Industrialized Countries." *European Journal of Political Research* 43(3): 449-476.
- Weingast, B.R. (1997). 'The Political Foundations of Democracy and the Rule of Law'. *The American Political Science Review*. 91(2): 245-263.
- Yiftachel, O. & A. Ghanem (2004). 'Understanding 'ethnocratic' regimes: the politics of seizing contested territories'. *Political Geography* 23(6): 647-676
- Zubida, H., and G. Doron. 2009. How to Coerce a Multi-Dimensional System into a Unidimensional Frame: Israel's 1996 Electoral Change. *World Political Science Review* 5(1): Article 8.

Student Responsibilities

The final grade will be divided as follows:

15% Participation

20% Critical Reading 1

20% Critical Reading 2

20% Group Project

25% Final Exam

These are the dates of the assignments' submission:

September 30th Critical Reading Assignment No. 1

November 11th Critical Reading Assignment No. 2

December 2nd Group Project

Dates of submission are final and any delay in submission not prearranged with me will yield a zero grade for the assignment.

Critical readings:

1. Choose one of the research papers (NOT BOOK CHAPTERS) studied by that point of the course in which submission is due.
2. Present its main research problem and the way it studies that problem. If it is a quantitative empirical paper, present its research question, concepts, measurement, hypotheses and findings. If it is a qualitative paper present its main themes, narrative, method of analysis and insights. If it is a theoretical deductive paper present its main concepts, axioms and hypotheses.
3. Propose a critique of that paper with respect to one of the following:
 - a. Its theoretical assumptions to the problem and question.
 - b. The concepts it uses.
 - c. The way it measures/interprets/analyzes these concepts.
 - d. The way the results of analysis are interpreted.

Group Project:

By October 15th five groups will submit a list of names of group members. Make sure you belong to one of the groups beforehand, or else people will be randomly assigned. Each group will simulate the strategic setting of a party leadership with accordance to the following division:

Group A- a Center party

Group B- A Center-Right party

Group C- A Center-Left party

Group D- An Extreme-Right party

Group E- An Extreme-Left party

By December 2nd each group will submit a strategic report, based on the readings and lectures, for 'its' party stating:

1. The potential voters' social composition and economic status.
2. The potential voters' policy positions on all relevant policy dimensions.
3. The policy that should be declared by the party in its pre-electoral platform.
4. The way its potential voters should be mobilized on Election Day.
5. The implications this strategy will have on the coalitions the party can join to.

Final Exam

The final exam will be based on two essay questions. Questions would be based on the following form:

1. Some claim that electoral rules affect the level of representation in political institutions and the way they function.
 - a. **Present** and **explain** three characteristics of electoral systems that affect the level of representation in parliament. **Illustrate** the characteristics' affect on representation using the Israeli case.
 - b. **Present** and **explain** two characteristics of electoral systems that affect the way coalitions function in multiparty parliaments. **Illustrate** the characteristics' affect on coalitions using the Israeli case.

Active Participation

Active participation should be based on contribution to class discussion on the basis of reading the relevant reading items, and other related scholarly work you are familiar with. In order to receive participation credit for a meeting at the end of each lesson you should be able to present at least one discussion point you contributed in the meeting. If I approve that then I will sign it. If at the end of the semester you will have 11-15 of those then you will have the full participation grade. If you will have 10-6 then you will have two-thirds of the grade and 5-1 then you will have a third of the grade. Should you decide not to participate that part of the grade is lost.

Basic guidelines:

1. *Appeals* for grades will be submitted in hardcopy to my mailbox by the end of the week in which you received back your papers.

2. *Plagiarism* as discovered will be passed on to the university's disciplinary authorities please avoid these issues.
3. *Course website*- Please check the website frequently I will upload my presentations there and will use it as a monitoring tool for the group project.
4. *Students with disabilities*- academic training can be rough and is rougher (yet not impossible) for students with disabilities. Please do not hesitate to contact: Students with Disabilities, Binghamton University, P.O. Box 6000, Binghamton, NY 13902-6000. Office: UU-119, Phone: 607-777-2686 (voice/TTY), Fax 607-777-6893. E-mail: ssd@binghamton.edu.