



AMERICAN UNIVERSITY
Washington, D.C. Fall 2008

SIS-319-001; SOCY-640-001;
SOCY-340-001; SIS-619-016

Israeli Society
Professor Yoram Peri

Class meetings: Wednesday 5:30-8:00 p.m. WATK 05
Office hours: Battelle-Tompkins T13, Wednesdays 3:00-4:00 p.m. and by appointment
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Course objectives

This course is an introduction to Israeli society, with the aim of exploring the fundamentals and origin of that society and the changes that have unfolded since its formative years in the 1920's and 1930's up to the beginning of the 21st century. Two major themes will be analyzed: the composition of Israeli society and the dominant myths that affect the collective memory, identity and culture.

Six meetings will be devoted to the six major "tribes" of modern Israel, as well as to other cultural and ethnic groups that comprise Israeli society. The course will also focus on Israel's changing collective identity, from the early 1950s when the founding fathers and mothers tried to mold a diverse immigrant population into a homogeneous, modern secular Jewish society, to the collapse of the hegemonic Ashkenazi culture and the development of post modern multi-center society with multi-culturalism. In addition, will be give attention to the impact of globalization and the "Americanization" of Israeli culture.

Methods of Instruction:

The course will be taught through lectures, discussions, students' presentations, guest speakers and films. I encourage you to ask questions and raise issues. We have flexibility in our schedule and can take time to discuss issues you may raise.

Course requirements:

1. Class attendance is mandatory and students are expected to actively participate in class.
2. You should read the material assigned for a date before that class.
3. Independent Work: Six groups will present in the class six Israeli myths, or cultural motifs. Each student will than write an independent paper on his group's topic. (See below).
4. The final exam (on Wednesday May 6 at 5:30 p.m.) will be a written comprehensive exam covering the course material.

Evaluation Criteria and Percentage of Grade

Class participation 20%
Presentation in the class 10%
Independent paper 25%
Final Exam 45%

A 95-100
 A- 90-95
 B+ 87-90
 B 83-87
 B- 80-83
 C+ 77-80
 C 73-77
 C- 70-73
 D 60-70
 F Bellow 60

Students who wish to have their final exams returned to them should provide the instructor with a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

Stay informed!

We will begin each one of our meetings, time permitting, with a discussion of current events in Israel. Therefore students are required to stay informed of the latest event and issues. I will gladly receive emails from you before our meetings with requests to deal with any particular topic.

Sources for extensive coverage include: the *New York Times*; Israeli dailies: *Ha'aretz* (leans left) (www.haaretz.com) and the *Jerusalem Post* (leans right) (www.jpost.com); *Jerusalem Report* (Internet) (www.jrep.com); Jerusalem Media and Communication Center (www.jmcc.org). Knowledge of current developments, especially events relating to material covered in the course, will influence the participation grade.

Paper Assignment

Papers must be typewritten or computer printed in 12 pt. font size. Each paper, up to 5 pages, should include a paper title, the title of the book, your name and the date of submission. This information should be at the top of the first page, or on a separate title page. Either form is acceptable. Each page (except the first) needs to be numbered. References to authors must be cited using a standard citation method.

Academic Integrity: Students are expected to abide by the *Academic Integrity Code* of American University (available online at www.american.edu/american/registrar/text/t_aic.html).

Changes to the syllabus The information contained in the course syllabus, other than the grade and absence policies, may be subject to change with reasonable advance notice, as deemed appropriate by the instructor.

Required readings:

Calvin Goldscheider (2002) *Israel's Changing Society: Population, Ethnicity, and Development*, Westview Press. Boulder, Colorado. (Pages will be specified before each meeting) pp.3-39; 43-64; 109-132.

Uzi Rebhun and Chaim I. Waxman (ed.) (2004) *Jews in Israel, Contemporary social and Cultural Patterns*, Brandeis University Press. (pages will be specified before each meeting)
[DS 126.5 J43]

Student who have no knowledge of Israel are advised to start with a basic but good introduction to the topic:

Gregory S. Mahler (2004) *Politics and Government in Israel*, Rowman and Littlefield, pp. 13-114. [on E-reserves]

Recommended:

Lissak and Horowitz (1989) *Troubles in Utopia, The Overburdened Polity of Israel*, Albany, NY. [JQ 1825. P3 H68] The entire book is on:
[http://books.google.com/books?id=xVgG53X44QYC&dq=Lissak+and+Horowitz+\(+++\)+Troubles+in+Utopia.&printsec=frontcover&source=bl&ots=L_nmmnwYlj&sig=1qb0x4nMFncoczJezdgGLco3cPI&hl=en&sa=X&oi=book_result&resnum=1&ct=result#PPP1,M1](http://books.google.com/books?id=xVgG53X44QYC&dq=Lissak+and+Horowitz+(+++)+Troubles+in+Utopia.&printsec=frontcover&source=bl&ots=L_nmmnwYlj&sig=1qb0x4nMFncoczJezdgGLco3cPI&hl=en&sa=X&oi=book_result&resnum=1&ct=result#PPP1,M1)

Baruch Kimmerling (2001) *The Invention and Decline of Israeliness: State, Society and the Military*. Los Angeles and Berkeley: University of California Press,

Calendar, Course Topics and Readings

Please note: The dates and topics are approximate: some topics may be discussed at greater length, and others may be concentrated. The student is responsible for keeping tabs with the pace of the lectures and readings.

**Week 1: January 14,
Course Overview and Introduction**

Required Reading:

Lissak and Horowitz, *Troubles in Utopia* p. chapter 1. [on E-reserves]

Calvin Goldscheider (2002) *Israel's Changing Society: Population, Ethnicity, and Development*, Westview Press. Boulder, Colorado. pp. 3-39 [on E-reserves]

Recommended reading:

Horowitz Dan and Lissak Moshe, *The Origins of Israeli Society: the Jewish Community Under the British Mandate*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1978. [DS 126. H671]

Michael Barnett (1996) The Politics of Uniqueness: The status of the Israeli Case, in Barnett, M. (ed.) *Israel in a Comparative Perspective*, Albany, Sunny Press. pp. 3-25. [DS 119.6. 175]

**Week 2. January 21,
Characteristics of Israeli Society**

Required Reading:

Don Horowitz and Moshe Lissak, *Origins of the Israeli Polity: Palestine under the Mandate* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1978), pp. 37-68.

Recommended Reading:

Calvin Goldscheider (2002) *Israel's Changing Society: Population, Ethnicity, and Development*, Westview Press. Boulder, Colorado. pp. 43-64; 109-132. [on E-reservses]

Documentary: *Tekuma*

**Week 3. January 28,
Myths, Collective Identity and memory**

Required Reading:

Introduction to independent work. Following this meeting six independent groups up to five students will work on seven themes and present each one for up to 30 minutes. Topics are:

- The Holocaust and its impact on Israeli Society
- The myth of the Sabra,
- Massadah
- The *Akedah*
- Time Cycle
- Self Identity
- Other Myths

Examples for reading on National Myths:

Yael Zrubavel (1995) *Recovered Roots, Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press. pp. 13-36.

The Haulocost:

Dalia Ofer (2004) History, Memory and the Identity - Perceptions of the Holocaust in Israel, in Uzi Rebhum and Chaim I. Waxman (ed.) *Jews in Israel*, pp. 394-417.

The Sabra:

Reconsidering the Sabra Ideal - Yael Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots* (1995), pp. 60-76; 192-213;

Yael Zerubavel "The "Mythological Sabra" and Jewish Past: Trauma, Memory, and Contested Identities", *Israel Studies* 7(2), 2002, pp. 115-120. 115-144

Oz Almog (2000) *The Sabra: The Creation of the New Jew*, University of California Press, Berkeley. pp. 1-22 (Recommended: and 23-72).

Michael Feige (2002) Introduction: Rethinking Israeli Memory and Identity, *Israeli Studies* Vol 7 (2) I-XIV.

Massada:

Nachman Ben-Yehuda (1995) *The Massada Myth*, University of Wisconsin Press.

Self identity:

Nurit Gertz, (2000) *Myths in Israeli culture*, Vollentine Mitchell, London and Portland pp. 27-58, 59-89.

The Akedah:

Avi Sagi (1998) *The Meaning of the Akedah in Israeli culture and Jewish tradition*, *Israel Studies*. 3 (1) 45-60.

Amos Elon, *The Israelis: Founders and Sons*, pp. 139-193;

Yaron Ezrahi (1997) *Rubber Bullets*, pp. 77-116.

Lilly Weissbrod, *Israeli Identity—In Search of a Successor to the Pioneer, Tsabar and Settler*, Frank Cass 2002, pp. 71-105.

Week 4. February 4,**Israeli society through the Theatre:**

Visit to J Theater at Washington JCC : *The Accident*

Week 5. February 11,

The Six Tribes of Israel: (1) *The Ashkenazim*

Required Reading:

S.N. Eisenstadt, *Israeli Society* (New York: Basic Books, 1967), pp. 7-58.

Asher Arian (2005) *Politics in Israel The Second* epublic CQPress, pp. 19-47.

Recommended reading:

Baruch Kimmerling (2001) *The Invention and Decline of Israeliness*, Berkeley, University of California Press. pp. 1-14; 56-88. [DS 113.3 .K56]

Students Presentation: The Holocaust**Week 6. February 18,**

The History of Gender (in)equality in Israel

Hanna Herzog (2004) "Women in Israeli society", in Uzi Rebhun and Chaim I. Waxman (eds.) *Jews in Israel*. pp. 195-220. [on E-reserves]

Week 7. February 25,

The Six Tribes of Israel: (2) *The Mizrahim*

Required Reading:

Sammy Smooha, "Class, Ethnic, and National Cleavages and Democracy in Israel," in *Israeli Democracy*, in *Israeli Democracy Under Stress* (hereafter *Israeli Democracy*), ed. by Ehud Sprinzak and Larry Diamond (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1993), pp. 309-342

Recommended reading:

The Movie: Salah Shabati

Students Presentation: The Sabra

**Week 8. March 4,
The Six Tribes of Israel: (3-4) The Religious groups**

Required Reading:

Alan Dowty (Fall 1999), *Is Israel Democratic? Substance and Semantics in the Ethnic Democracy Debate*, *Israel Studies* 4(2) pp. 1-15.

Recommended reading:

Asher Cohen, (2004) *Changes in the Orthodox Camp and their Influence on the Deepening Religious-Secular Schism at the Outset of the 21 Century*, pp. 71-94 in Dowty, Alan (ed.) *Critical Issues in Israeli Politics*, Westport Connecticut and London, Praeger,

Bernard Avishai (2008) *The Hebrew Republic*, pp. 1-21.

Asher Cohen and Bernard Susser (2000), *Israel and the Politics of Jewish Identity* Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press. Chapters 1 and 2.

Students Presentation: Massadah

**Week 9. March 11,
Spring Break**

**Week 10. March 18,
The Six Tribes of Israel: (5) Russian speaking Israelis**

Required Reading:

Zvi Gitelman (2000) *The Russian Revolution in Israel*, pp 95-108 in Dowty Alan (ed.) (2004) *Critical Issues in Israeli Politics*, Westport Connecticut And London: Praeger, pp. 95-108
[on E Reserves]

Recommended reading:

Elazar Leshem and Moshe Sicron (2004) The Soviet Immigrant Community in Israel, in Gregory S. Mahler (2004) *Politics and Government in Israel*, Rowman and Littlefield, pp. 81-117. [on E-reserves]

Students Presentation: The Akedah**Week 11. March 25,
Israel's Six Tribes: (6) The Palestinians****Required Reading:**

The Arab Minority in Israel: An Analysis of the "Future Vision" Documents:
(<http://www.ajc.org/atf/cf/%7B42d75369-d582-4380-8395-d25925b85eaf%7D/ARAB%20MINORITY%20IN%20ISRAEL.PDF>)

Ian Lustick, *Arabs in the Jewish State: Israel's Control of a National Minority* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1980), pp. 1-27.

Recommended reading:

The Arabs of Israel after Oslo: Localization of the national struggle, *Israel Studies* (220) 3(1) pp. 1-44.

Ian Lustick (Summer 1999) Israel as a Non-Arab State: The Political Implications of Mass Immigration of Non-Jews, *Middle East Journal*, 53 (3) pp. 101-117.

Students Presentation: Time Cycle**Week 12. April 1,
Ethiopians, Work immigrants, & others;
From Melting Pot to Multi Culturalism****Required Reading:**

Ruven Waxman, (2000) The Americanization of Israel: A demographic, Cultural and Political Evaluation, *Israel Studies*, 5(1) pp. 65-92.

Azaryah Maoz (2000) McIsrael? On the Americanization of Israel, *Israel Studies*, 5(1) pp. 41-65.

Recommended reading:

Baruch Kimmerling (2001) *The Invention and decline of Israeliness*, pp. 130-172.
[DS 113.3 .K56]

Students Presentation: Self Identity**Week 13. April 8,
Pessach, No Class**

**Week 14. April 15,
The Cultural War: Americanization, Globalization; Jerusalem v. Tel-Aviv**

Required Reading:

Yoram Peri (2005) *The Assassination of Yitzhak Rabin*, Stanford University Press, Introduction and chapter 1.

Recommended reading:

Charles S. Liebman (1997) "Reconceptualizing the Cultural Conflict among Israeli Jews", *Israel Studies*, Vol. 2 (2) 172-189.

Students Presentation: Other Myths

**Week 15. April 22,
Wrap up**

Required Reading:

Guy Ben-Porat (2008) *Israeli society: Diversity, Tensions and governance*. In Guy Ben-Porat, Shlomo Mizrahi, Arye Naor & Erez Tzfadia (ed.) (2008) *Israel Since 1980*, Cambridge, Cambridge University press. pp. 9-41. [on E-reserves].

**Week 16. April 29,
Spring Study Day (and Independence Day *Yom Ha'atzma'ut*)**

**Week 17. May 6
Final Exam**
