

Soc 197E
Israeli Society
Professor Aziza Khazzoom

All modules

Khazzoom@soc.ucla.edu • 261A Haines 310-825-1281

Introduction

This course reviews the literature Israeli social scientists – primarily sociologists – have produced about Israel. For the most part, these researchers study Israel the same way US sociologists study the US. For example, they are highly concerned with social problems – such as gender or ethnic inequality – and with other social dynamics, such as immigration, the role of institutions in distributing resources, the ways in which groups construct identity, etc.

This leads to several outstanding features of Israeli sociology, all of which may seem odd to those who know Israel from a different perspective. First, Israeli sociologists tend to see Israel as *not* unique, or as fundamentally similar to other modern industrialized societies. Second, they analyze Israel as a culture plagued by cleavage and inequality, rather than as the homeland of the Jews. As a result, they are often highly critical of Israel. Third, most see Zionism as a nationalist discourse, a member of the family of ethno-nationalist discourses that arose in Eastern Europe in the late 19th century. As a result, many are currently engaged in “deconstructing” that discourse, or in articulating and questioning its basic assertions. The main point though is that Israeli sociologists, in important ways, simply do not see Israel as special.

In this class, we will analyze Israeli society within the same framework that Israeli sociologists use, but we will also not assume that that is the correct framework to use. We will consider some of the following questions in the course:

- Who are the different ethnic, national, class, religious, and immigrant groups that live in Israel today? What does it mean to them to live in a Jewish state? How much have different groups settled into one Israel, and how much are cleavages deepening? What can this tell us generally about how societies cohere, and the possibilities for multiculturalism worldwide?
- What was the nature of the nationalist project that led to the establishment of the state (which is a very complicated way of describing Zionism, but important because it locates Zionism as one of many similar ideologies that developed in Europe at the time)? On what grounds have Jewish Israelis begun to re-evaluate this project? Why have they done so? And how important is Zionist ideology to US Jewish thought and identity, and are US Jews also re-evaluating it?

- Jews lived in Moslem countries for centuries before the establishment of the state of Israel. What was their relationship like? How has this history shaped Arab/Israeli relations today? Why do some Jews of Middle Eastern origin call themselves “Arab Jews”, or “victims of Zionism”, while others insist that they are ethnically neutral Jewish Israelis, and what does that mean for the place the Jewish state can find in the Middle East? What does it mean generally for the processes by which ethnic identities are built?
- What is living in Israeli society like for women of different class, ethnic, national, and religious backgrounds? What does this tell us about how participating in a nationalist project shapes women’s lives? Or about how gender and ethnicity interact in a globalized society?

The all-important issue of assignments and grades

Grades are incredibly important to undergraduates, and unlike many people, I don’t mind grade-consciousness. Grades are, in fact, markers that will determine your futures, and you have the right to know exactly how you got a grade. I will try to make that as clear as possible in my comments, and please do not hesitate to come to my office to talk about a grade.

There are no exams in this class. You are graded on three features of your performance: a term paper (50%), your summaries of the readings and discussion questions (35%), and class participation (15%):

The term paper is 50% of your grade. It can be on any topic concerning Israel, either something we have discussed in class, or an interest of your own. It must, however, be sociological. It should be approximately 15 pages long, and should include about 10 outside readings, if it is a literature review, or about 2 outside readings if you are independently analyzing data.

By the end of the 7th week of class, you should have turned in to me a one-paragraph abstract of your topic, and a list of the work you will read or the data you will collect. If possible, you should tell me what you believe your argument will be. This will give me a chance to respond before having to give you a grade. I accept drafts; one per person for sure, and sometimes more than one, depending on circumstances.

SOME TIPS ON WRITING PAPERS

Note that I grade the papers with more exacting standards than I grade the summaries. I understand the summaries as first takes; because you have a lot of time to think about your papers, my standard is perfection.

General: NOTE THAT TO RECEIVE AN A OR A-, the paper has to have some original thought to it. That is, a paper that does a very good job summarizing some literature will likely get a B+, or, if it is truly stunning, an A-. An A or A- paper usually combines that excellent literature review with some DATA-BASED

reflection or opinion, and usually has that opinion organize the paper and presentation of the data. In general, people do better on sociology papers if they are critical. That does not mean that you must disagree, but that you must always show that you have not simply accepted the argument without thinking. Does the argument make sense? What similar situations do you know of, and would the argument make sense there? Is the author working from assumptions that might not be correct? **Most importantly:** What have we learned in class that might suggest a different perspective?

Although I don't grade on writing style, I do grade on clarity. An A or A- paper will ALWAYS have a clear argument. Most of the time, that argument should be stated in one clear and succinct sentence by the end of the first paragraph of the paper.

References: Whenever you are stating something you have learned, you must cite it. This is only partly an issue of plagiarism; not properly citing work is also sloppy. Moreover it help you if you are clear about what is your idea and what is someone else's. I know most work about Israel, and may think you are just paraphrasing someone else's idea – which lowers your grade – unless you clarify that this is something you came up with, and how and why.

A good place to find writings on your topic is Cambridge Abstracts, which contains abstracts (one-paragraph summaries) of most of the articles written in most of the larger journals over the last 40 years. You can access it through the library's online resources page. If you don't know how to use Cambridge Abstracts, ask a librarian.

Summaries and discussion questions are 35% of your grade. Each week, about half of the class will be responsible for producing a summary and analysis of the week's reading; over the course of the quarter, each student has to produce 5 summaries. By 5 pm two days before class you should have uploaded your summary on to the discussion section of the class web page (it automatically clocks your submission, so I know if it is on time or not). They are due so early because the discussion leader will need time to read them. Late summaries will be deducted a full grade; this is not because I care about lateness so much as I don't want the discussion leader to be left without postings to work with. Each summary should be about two pages long. The first one to three paragraphs should summarize the reading, the next two to three paragraphs should try to comment on one or two issues that the reading has raised. **Do not try to summarize the whole reading.** Ask yourself what the author's main argument is, and what s/he is saying that you think is important, and stick to those aspects of the work. Remember that the discussion leader will be using your postings to come up with discussion questions; try to be as helpful as possible.

The following questions *must* be answered in your summary:

General sociology

- What is the main argument of the piece? What kind of evidence does the author have to support this argument? Is the connection between evidence and argument as strong as the author says? Are there other ways to interpret the evidence?
- What kinds of general sociological processes are being examined here? How do the argument and the information you got fit into the general picture we (or you) are developing of Israel?

And the following questions should be answered when they are relevant:

Background assumptions

- What do you know about who is writing the piece? Can you get a sense of their politics? Do you think these factors affect their argument? How and why?
- Does this work present Israel as a unique society, or as typical of societies generally? How do you know that, i.e. what kind of evidence is the author using? Do you agree with them?
- Does the work present Israel as part of the western world or part of the Middle East? Would the author see things differently if they answered the question differently?
- And does the work present Israel as a unified society or one with lots of cleavages? Is this appropriate, based on the topic? Would the analysis look different with a different set of assumptions?

Each student also has to lead class discussion one time during the quarter. To do so, you look at the postings the other students have put on the web, and write up a set of discussion questions; one to two pages worth. Each summary and set of questions will be graded and the five grades averaged equally to produce your grade on summaries.

Class participation is 15% of your grade. The concept of class participation can be divided into two things: showing up and talking. Some people are better than others at talking, so talking is extra credit. Each week, I will take roll. You get an A if you have either perfect attendance or miss one class, after that, you lose a grade for every class you miss. That way, if you miss 5 classes, you have an F on this component. Talking is completely subjective, but basically if you are on the border between two grades and you talked a lot in class, I will give you the higher grade. Sometimes people's contributions in class are so good that I actually bump their grade up, but that is pretty rare.

Flexible modules

The second section of this course – Israeli voices – is only four weeks. There are, however, far more than four voices in Israel, and I have elaborated several “alternate weeks”, most of which highlight different voices. Individual students may, by permission, elect to read from an alternate week instead of the assigned week. They will then, *in addition to the summaries they already have to write*, have to give a verbal report on their module's readings to the class.

Getting materials

Books are available at ASUC (including select recommended readings), and on reserve at the Young library. A course reader containing all required readings is at Westwood Copies, on Weyburn and Gayley, 310-208-3233. Note that the reader will be available during the second week of classes. Note also that not all books at ASUC will be used for course – buy selectively.

A final note

As you think about Israeli society, remember that it is a heterogeneous society. Even further, remember that who, exactly, we should include in the category “Israelis” is an extraordinarily complex issue, as is the question of which groups that are technically not Israeli should nevertheless be included in an analysis.

This is important because in order to understand Israeli Society as a whole, you really have to keep track of all its component parts. This means that if you want to write a paper, for example, about what having a Jewish state means to Israelis, you have to account for the fact that how “Israelis” feel about Israel’s Jewishness depends heavily on whether they have citizenship or not, live in Israel or not, identify as Arab, Palestinian, Druze, Bedouin, Mizrahi, (or perhaps even Iraqi Jewish or Moroccan Jewish), Ashkenazi, Filipino, Rumanian (Jewish or not), Russian (Jewish or not), Moslem, Catholic, Protestant, or Jewish, are immigrants or Israeli-born, fluent in English, French, Arabic, or Hebrew, ultra orthodox, “mesorati”, or secular, residents of development towns, border towns, kibbutzim, settlements, Lebannon, occupied territories, homogeneous central areas like Tel Aviv, heterogeneous central areas like Jerusalem and Haifa, secular areas like Tel Aviv and Haifa or religious areas like Jerusalem and Jewish Hebron, whether their families went through the Holocaust, the Farhoud, expulsion from the new Israeli state, or voluntary evacuation of the new Israeli state, whether their migrations were followed by extraordinary poverty, economic stability, or economic improvement, whether they came to Israel from east European ghettos, the Arabic countryside, or the large and westernized communities from Warsaw, Baghdad, Odessa or Casablanca, whether they attended an Israeli university, an American one, or none at all, whether they hail from folks who immigrated before or after the establishment of the state and even more.

SECTION 1: ISRAELI IDENTITY, US JEWISH IDENTITY, AND WHOSE ISRAEL IS IT ANYWAY.

Is the Israel that Israelis talk about the same as the one that US Jews talk about? Or do the two groups have very different sets of dreams, conceptions, and expectations for Israel? What role does Israel have in US Jewish identity, and vice versa? Does Israel really, as the UJA puts it, “need us” (and who, incidentally, is “us”)? Do US Jews need Israel? And is the concept of “Diaspora” a useful framework to think these dynamics through, and while we are at it, are Jews a “regular” Diaspora, or somehow different?

WEEK 2: Israel from a US Jewish (?) perspective

Required:

Auerbach, *Are we One*

Pages 1-26, 141-166, 167-173, 202-214. If you have little background on Jewish history in Europe, the Haskalah, and its effects, also read 27-50.

Charles Liebman and Steven Cohen, *The Two Worlds of Judaism*, Yale U Press, 1990.

P 157-159 (read first), 67-95. IN READER

William Saffran, “Diasporas in modern societies: myths of homeland and return”. *Diaspora* 1(1):83-99. 1991. IN READER.

Recommended:

Mervin Verbit, “Jewish Identity and the Israel-Diaspora dialogue” *Forum on the Jewish People, Zionism, and Israel* 48:63-74. Spring 1983. IN READER

Antje Lindernmeyer, “The rewriting of home: autobiographies by daughters of immigrants”. *Women’s Studies International Forum*. 24(3-4), 2001. IN READER.

WEEK 3: Israel from an Israeli (Jewish? Ashkenazi?) perspective

Required:

Kimmerling, *The Invention and Decline of Israeliness*, UC Press, 2001.

Introduction, Chapters 3, 4, Conclusion (1-15, 89-130, 229-238)

Yinon Cohen, "From Haven to Heaven: Changing patterns of immigration to Israel". Pp. 36-56 in Levy D. and Y. Weiss (eds), *Citizenship and Identity: Germany and Israel in Comparative Perspective*. NY: Berghahn books. IN READER.

Glenda Abramson, "Introduction" in *The Americanization of Israel*, special issue of *Israeli Studies* 5(1):vii-xii spring, 2000. IN READER

Recommended:

Other chapters of Kimmerling's book, in the following order: 7, 5, 2, 6

Shafir, *The new Israeli*. UC Press 2002.

WEEK 4: Theory: The concept of collective memory and the imagined community.

Required:

Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots*. University of Chicago Press, 1995.

Part I (p 1-36), ONE chapter, of your choice, from Part II, (39-76), Conclusion (214-238).

Esther Meir-Glitzenstein, "Our Dowry: Identity and Memory among Iraqi Immigrants in Israel", *Middle Eastern Studies* 38(2): 165-186. 2002. IN READER

SECTION 2: WHO LIVES IN ISRAEL

Which groups live in Israel? To what extent is it possible to combine groups, e.g. by talking about "Arabs" rather than Bedouins, Arabs with Israeli citizenship, etc?

WEEK A: Some theoretical scaffolding, and Bedouin voices

Required:

Thomas Hylland Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Anthropological Perspectives*. Pluto Press 1993.

"What is ethnicity?", and "'Kinds' of Ethnic relations?" IN READER.

Lila Abu-Lughod, *Writing Women's Worlds* (Bedouin women in Egypt). UC Press, 1993.

Preface, pages 1-25, 167-242. Note that on p xxiii there is a list of names of characters.

Recommended:

Stephen Cornell, Douglas Hartmann, *Ethnicity and Race: Making Identities in a Changing World*. Pine Forge Press, 1997.

Chapter 3 (pages 39-71). . IN READER

WEEK B: Ashkenazi Jewish feminist voices

Required:

Deborah Bernstein, *The Struggle for Equality, Urban Women Workers in Prestate Israeli Society*. Praeger, NY, 1987.

P. 1-9, 27-66, 108, 155-178.

Harriet Hartman and Moshe Hartman, "How equal is equal? A comparison of gender equality among Israeli and American Jews" *Contemporary Jewry*. 14(1): 48-72. . IN READER

Steir, Haya, and Noah Lewin-Epstien, "Welfare Regimes, Family-Supportive Policies, and Women's Employment along the Life Course". *American Journal of Sociology* 106(6):1731-60. May 2001. IN READER

Rae Lesser Blumberg, "Kibbutz women: from the fields of revolution to the laundries of discontent". IN READER.

Recommended:

Susan Sered, *What Makes Women Sick*. Brandeis, 2000.

WEEK C: Male Palestinian (or Israeli Arab?) voices

Required:

Nadim Rouhana, *Palestinian Citizens in an Ethnic Jewish State*. Yale, 1997.

P 109-198.

Dani Rabinowitz, "In and out of territory", in Ben-Ari and Bilu, eds, *Grasping Land*. SUNY Press, 1997. IN READER.

Recommended:

Edward Said, *Out of Place*. Vintage Press, 1999.

WEEK D: Secular-liberal (male?) Ashkenazi voices

Required:

Ezrahi, *Rubber Bullets*. UC Press, 1997.

Introduction, Chapters 1, 4, 8, 9 (3-30, 59-76, 175-206, 267-296).

Recommended:

Kimmerling, *The Invention and Decline of Israeliness*, UC Press, 2001.

Chapter 7 (208-228)

WEEK E: Mizrahi male and female voices

Shavit, Yossi. "Arab and Jewish Minorities in Israeli Education." *American Sociological Review*, 55(1) February 1990. IN READER

Shohat, Ella. "Sephardim in Israel: Zionism From the Point of View of its Jewish Victims". *Social Text*, 19-20:1-35. 1988. IN READER

Yehouda Shenhav, "The Jews of Iraq, Zionist Ideology, and the Property of the Palestinian Refugees of 1948: an Anomaly of Accounting". *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 31 (1999) IN READER

Zvi Zohar. "Traditional Flexibility and Modern Strictness: Two Halakhic Positions on Women's Suffrage." Pp. 119-133 in Harvey E. Goldberg, ed, *Sephardi and Middle Eastern Jewries: History and Culture in the Modern Era*. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press. 1996. IN READER

WEEK F: Jewish religious male and female voices

Required:

Tamar El Or, *Educated and Ignorant*. Boulder : Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1994

Zvi Zohar. "Traditional Flexibility and Modern Strictness: Two Halakhic Positions on Women's Suffrage." Pp. 119-133 in Harvey E. Goldberg, ed, *Sephardi and Middle Eastern Jewries: History and Culture in the Modern Era*. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press. 1996. IN READER

Recommended:

P 195-262 of Tom Segev, *The First Israelis*. Free Press, 1986.

Stillman, *Sephardi Religious responses to modernity*. Luxembourg : Harwood Academic Publishers, 1995.

WEEK G: gay male voices

Rebecca T. Alpert, "In God's Image: Coming to terms with Leviticus", in *Twice blessed : on being lesbian, gay, and Jewish*, edited by Christie Balka and Andy Rose, Boston: Beacon Press, 1989.

Sumakai-Fink and Press, *Independence park*

Required: Introduction (p. 1-14) and Afterword (p365-67), Andrei (p. 121-142), Walid (p. 197-219), Shahar (p 15-49), Eli (p143-164).

Recommended: Look at the descriptions of each individual at the beginning of their chapter, and read other chapters that you find interesting.

WEEK H: Palestinian women's voices

Required:

Julie Peteet, "Icons and Militants: Mothering in a danger zone", *Signs* 23(1): 103-129. 1997. IN READER

Rhoda Kanaaneh, *Birthing the Nation: Negotiating Babies and Boundaries in the Galilee*. UC Press 2001. Chapter 4: "Fertile Differences". IN READER

Amalia Sa'ar. "Strong but not powerful: reflections on power and gender among Israeli-Palestinian women". Paper presented to the annual conference of the Israeli Anthropological Association, Jerusalem, May 2000. IN READER

Recommended:

Julie Peteet, "Male gender and rituals of resistance in the Palestinian Intifadah" *American Ethnologist* 21(1):31-49, 1994. IN READER

WEEK I: Coping with political violence; effects of political violence on social organization.

Julie Peteet, "Male gender and rituals of resistance in the Palestinian Intifadah" *American Ethnologist* 21(1):31-49, 1994

(other readings TBA)

SECTION 3: CURRENT INTERNAL ISRAELI DEBATES AND SOCIAL ISSUES

What are the social issues that Israelis are debating, particularly in the academy?

WEEK 9: Postzionism: Should Israel be a Jewish state?

I The Palestinian viewpoint

Nadim Rouhana, *Palestinian Citizens in an Ethnic Jewish State*

Chapters 3, 4 (Pages 27-64)

II The raw material on which Rouhana builds his arguments

Israel's constitution IN READER

III. Some left and less-left Jewish Israeli attempts to respond.

Required:

Sammy Smooha, "Ethnic Democracy: Israel as Archetype" *Israel Studies* 2(2): 198-241. IN READER

Oren Yiftachel, "Debate: The concept of 'ethnic democracy' and its applicability to the case of Israel" *Ethnic and Racial Studies*. 15(1): 125-136. January, 1992. . IN READER

Recommended:

Yoav Peled, "Ethnic democracy and the legal construction of citizenship: Arab citizens of the Jewish state". *American Political Science Review* 86(2). IN READER

IV. Why did the original East-European Zionists feel the state needed to be Jewish?

Required:

CHOOSE ONE OF THE FOLLOWING TWO (Shimoni is a better and more complete summary, but written from a postzionist, secular Jewish Israeli point of view; Avineri remains a non-postZionist Zionist, but his summary is less complete, and is not explicitly directed toward the issue at hand).

Shlomo Avineri, *The Making of Modern Zionism: The Intellectual Origins of the Jewish State*.

Chapters on Lilienblum and Pinsker (p 65-82). IN READER

OR

Gideon Shimoni, *The Zionist Ideology* Brandies U Press, 1995.

Chapter 8, “The Right to the Land” Pages 351-388. (Note the selection in the reader begins with page 333). IN READER

Recommended:

Selections from the writings of Pinsker, Nordau, and Herzl. IN READER

The rest of Shimoni’s chapter. IN READER

WEEK 10: Should Israel be a western or a middle eastern state? Are Mizrahim Jews or Arabs? And what kind of light does the long history of Jews in Arab lands shed on the Arab/Israeli conflict?

Khazzoom, “Orientalism, Jewish Identity, and the sources of social closure in Israel” IN READER

Yoram Bilu and Andre Levy, “Nostalgia and Ambivalence: The Reconstruction of Jewish-Muslim relations in Oulad Mansour”. In Harvey E. Goldberg, ed, *Sephardi and Middle Eastern Jewries: History and Culture in the Modern Era*. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press. 1996. IN READER

Yehouda Shenhav, "Jews from Arab Countries: An Ethnic Community in Realms of National Memory". IN READER